

JEHUDA HALEVI: KUZARI

Abridged edition with an introduction and
a commentary by Isaak Heinemann

PREFACE

JEHUDA HALEVI did not write his philosophic works primarily for philosophers. But the fact that the *Kuzari* is intelligible to the general public in no way signifies that it is shallow. His point of departure is certainly not philosophic argument, with which he is naturally well acquainted, but rather the questioning of a cultured reader on religion and Judaism. But just because he binds neither his reader nor himself to any particular authority or dogmatic notion, he has produced a work in no way inferior in philosophic worth to any produced by expert competitors in the same field.

Our little book does not only present *Jehuda Halevi* as its subject: it ventures to take the author's generally comprehensible presentation as its model. This study is likewise based on scholarly literature on the subject. But I am well aware that a great number of questions which interest the expert—such as *Jehuda Halevi*'s sources and his relations to certain thinkers of his cultural sphere—are of minor importance to those readers whom *Jehuda Halevi* himself had in mind. And we certainly believe that he wrote not only for men of his own time. For the thinking Jew of today the main question is: What is *Jehuda Halevi*'s message in the conflict of ideals raging in our own time? What is his contribution and what stimulus can he give us? It is the object of our study to provide an answer to these questions that is scientifically sound and yet intelligible to every honestly thinking reader.

For this purpose an introduction is needed to help the reader to distinguish between the passing and the permanent value of *Jehuda Halevi*.

We have only quoted from the *Kuzari* what is of philosophic importance.¹ In particular, we have omitted digressions on

¹ Messrs. George Routledge & Sons Ltd. were kind enough to authorize my use of the English translation of Hirschfeld, which they have published. I am also deeply indebted to my friend D. H. Baneth of the Jerusalem

language, calendar, etc., as well as polemics against contemporaries in as far as these do not yield any positive conclusions. We have, on the other hand, added a few poems of philosophic content. The commentary is confined to an exposition of the thought expressed. To more ambitious readers we recommend the English (and German) translations of Hirschfeld, the French selection of Ventura, the commentaries of Cassel (German, 2nd ed. 1869) and Zifrinowitsch (Hebrew), and my exposition of the philosophic poems of Jehuda Halevi in the Hebrew Year Book *Kneseet IX* (1945) 261 ff.

Mrs. Hebe R. Mayer-Bentwich is responsible for the revision of my translation of the Arabic text, and for the translation from the German of the preface, introduction and commentary. At my express request she has throughout retained certain technical terms such as 'pick' and 'power', which are explained in the commentary, with the inevitable consequence of a certain inflexibility of style.

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University, who very kindly put at my disposal a manuscript translation into German. It is founded on collations of the Arabic and Hebrew manuscripts and on an excellent command of the languages; in a number of passages (e.g. Book I, § 25) it bears out the fact that Ibn Tibbon's MS. is superior to the Oxford MS. used by Hirschfeld.

INTRODUCTION

THE object of this introduction is to ensure a complete understanding of Jehuda Halevi's teaching, but not to obviate the necessity of studying the original.

It aims at focusing the reader's attention on the pivot of Jehuda Halevi's thought and at presenting his teaching from the modern view-point. Just as Jehuda Halevi (and Hillel before him) strove to conceive Judaism in all its details as evolving from this pivot of religious conception, so should the reader endeavour to conceive Jehuda Halevi himself.

A short review of the experience he derived from life and education will be found necessary.¹

His early years fell in the period of Christian reaction to the triumphal march of the Moslemin, who had occupied Palestine as early as the seventh century and Spain in the eighth. In both these outposts of Islam, the Christians made important progress in the eleventh century. At the time of Jehuda Halevi's childhood, in 1085, Toledo fell into the hands of the Cid; in his youth, the Crusaders besieged Jerusalem. Whereas in the Holy Land the Moslemin summoned up heart and courage enough to make successful counter-attacks, the pride of Spanish knighthood assumed such proportions that Alfonso VII was able in 1126 to proclaim himself Ruler of the whole of Spain.

Whilst, in the words of Jehuda Halevi, 'Christian and Moslem share the whole world between them' (the 'world' of Medieval Europeans, which scarcely extended beyond the one continent and the Mediterranean countries), the Jew is condemned to nameless suffering. 'They wage their wars and drag us down in their fall,' is his complaint in one of his poems, adding, in a Bible quotation: 'and so it was from the beginning of Israel'. There is nothing to suggest that he envied the knights their bloody laurels; his view of life aims higher

¹ Cf. Shirman, *Tarbiz* ix, 35 ff., 219 ff.; Baer, *The Jews in Christian Spain* (Hebrew) i, 49 ff.

than warfare. But the impotence of his people in worldly affairs is not only a burning wound in his side; it becomes a consuming problem, which he attacks with all the weapons that the culture of his time affords him. For notwithstanding the religious conflicts, Jehuda Halevi seems to have found ways and means in his youth of securing a sound introduction to the cultural trends of the time. He is such a master of the Bible that he is able to exploit the whole wealth of its language. The clever use he makes of double meanings in certain verses lends to his poems a peculiar charm: he is as much at home in the poetry of the *Aggadah* as in his discussions of the *Halakah*. He was able to write his chief philosophical work in Arabic, and Arabic metre influences most of his poetry. He also knew Castilian; but, both as poet and thinker, he comes mainly under the influence of the great Arab culture. He is specially well acquainted with Arab science (he was a reputed physician) and philosophy, including, of course, its Greek origins. Other details of his life known to us are not important for the understanding of his literary work; but the fact that he really undertook the journey to the land of his dreams which he announces at the end of the *Kuzari* may be considered the logical outcome of his thinking; he went as far as Egypt and Tyre; it is not sure whether he reached Palestine.

Thus we see that Jehuda Halevi belongs to the class of 'Zweistromland' people (F. Rosenzweig), who seek a synthesis between their Jewish inheritance and general philosophy. But in contrast to most thinkers of whom we know, he was very late in formulating this synthesis in a scholarly way. And when he wrote his '*Kuzari*' at the age of about 50, he did not in any way consider himself to be a 'philosopher' in the contemporary sense (*Kuzari* I, § 1)—i.e. an adherent of definite doctrines, particularly Aristotelian—but rather a man of learning who, as such, did not subscribe to any official 'philosophy'; he aspired, by the use of scholarly methods, to uphold an attitude to the world and Judaism in accordance with the traditions of his religion and no less with his personal conception.

With none of that tendency to penetrating dialectics which Crescas betrayed at a later date, he displays absolute independence in his estimate of the conventional doctrines of philosophy, which were generally accepted uncritically in those times. But with speculative independence he combines the physician's clear apprehension of empiric reality and the urge to check up dull theories through knowledge of life; on the other hand he displays the profound sympathy of the artist for everything that touches the heart of the individual and the soul of his people: 'to wail for thy affliction (O Zion), I am like the jackals, but when I dream of the return of thy captivity I am a harp for thy songs'. His reasoning is therefore never 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'; he might be termed a 'visual thinker' ('Augendenker'), if we bear in mind that his inward eye, bent on spiritual experience, was no less keen in its vision than the sensual eye.

The title of his book shows with what independence and breadth of view Jehuda Halevi, the visual thinker, conceived the problem of Judaism. The pleasure in rhymes that was so characteristic of his time led him to formulate the title in a little verse: 'the book of argument and proof in defence of a despised religion'. The words for 'proof' and 'despised' rhyme and alliterate in a manner recalling plays on words found in the Bible; thus one word refers to the other: the proof is the answer to the despite and to the spiritual oppression it produces. The task of an apologist of Judaism might seem the same as that of a defender of Christianity and Islam, who also had to fight against attacks of the sister religions. But Jehuda Halevi senses that in the defence of Judaism something else is at stake: the Christian and the Moslem are sure of the esteem of their opponents; the Jew has to defend not only his faith but also his *honour*. The characteristic feature of this book lies in the pointed paradox whereby the most oppressed religious community is proved to be the bearer of the highest, yea, the absolute religious truth. This explains the peculiar form of the book. It is the only genuine dialogue (extending beyond a mere catechism of question and answer) in Jewish philosophy

of the Middle Ages, although one might have expected imitation of the Platonic dialogue to be particularly near to the Jew, who had examples of philosophic dialogue before his eyes in the book of Job and in many a text of the Aggadah. It was probably, in the first place, his artist's sense that prompted Jehuda Halevi to choose a form where the easy offset of one theme against another, with frequent surprising turns, lends the serious subject-matter a real charm and brings the book, which intentionally only fringes on professional philosophy, well within the grasp of the serious-minded layman. The artist's creative instinct betrays itself also in the portrayal of the young king, somewhat hasty in judgement, but nevertheless moved by a noble search for truth—the master, imbued with serene certainty, always ready to admit difficult points in the various problems and even the faults of his own people, but deeply convinced, nevertheless, of the fundamental truth of his doctrine. The dialogue form is also well suited to the contents of the book. Like the best of Plato's dialogues, its arguments, setting out from the firm ground of historical event, not only achieve a change of mind on the part of the king, but a real spiritual conversion; he is moved from deep contempt of Judaism, clearly expressed in Book I, § 12, to complete agreement of views, and renders full honour not only to Judaism, but to the whole Jewish Community.

Jehuda Halevi's answer is as peculiar as his question, not only in content, but also in method. All other medieval authors, in presenting Judaism, pass from the general to the particular. They dwell first on the justification of faith in God, and consider hereby to have proved the justification of religion as a contact with God and as a belief in historical revelation.¹ Starting out from this premise, they justify Judaism by showing that the revelation of God to Moses has never lost its force and by dealing with the objections to Christian dogma and to the personality of Mahomet. Christians and Moslems

¹ Maimonides includes his proofs of God only in Book II of his 'Guide' where he starts to write for scholars, having, in the beginning, intended his remarks for laymen also.

follow a similar line; it is therefore no wonder if the King of the Khazars holds this to be the only possible line of reasoning (Book I, § 12).

But his 'Master' does not follow it. Judaism is not merely the goal—it is also the *point of departure* of his argument. The fact of the revelation, recognized in ancient times and in their own day, is the proof of the belief in God; whereas the attribution of organic wonders to a cosmic intelligence is, firstly, less convincing and acceptable, and, secondly, only leads to the conception of a God of metaphysics and not to a God of religion, who is concerned for the individual and expects a definite reaction from him. Still less than the *idea* of religion is philosophy able to explain the historical *phenomenon* of religion. Arab philosophy also professes belief in the notion of the prophets and asserts—and *must* assert, if it aspires to be the foundation of our piety—that this highest grade of humanity is attained by the perfection of our spiritual powers, and that therefore philosophical training leads us to it (Book I, § 18; Book V, § 12 middle). But the testimony of history contradicts this claim of philosophy; history shows that prophecy is not found among the philosophers (Book I, § 4; § 99 end); its classical representatives are to be sought pre-eminently among people belonging to a distant group of humanity who have not passed through any school of learning (this is also the case with Christian and Moslem). However, Jehuda Halevi betrays in no way such an absolute negative attitude to philosophy as Luther did; but he does show a marked degree of reserve as regards its claims to the basis of religion. A religious life is to be regarded in the first place as a fact of experience; we cannot reconstruct its terms on bare theory, but we must seek them in experience with the help of such aspects as philosophy of life (biology) has long ago established.

Does, then, religious philosophy have to have a scientific foundation? Certainly. For Jehuda Halevi's visual thinking has two aspects; just as all colourless speculation divorced from experience is foreign to him, so also is any mechanical doctoring which only states the bare essential fact without consideration

of its sources. In this attitude he had great forerunners in the natural scientists, who were the originators of medieval culture. The pupils of Hippocrates and Galen were not only acquainted with the general notions of 'Erbmasse' and 'Milieu'; they already knew of those 'recessive phenomena' recently exhaustively treated by Gregor Mendel, i.e. they were aware of the fact that a characteristic which disappears in the second generation reappears in the third (Book I, § 95 end); they closely investigated influences exerted by conditions of life; a writing produced by the school of Hippocrates to which Jehuda Halevi alludes (Book I, § 1) deals with the biological effects of 'winds, waters, and districts'. They distinguished between three grades of life—plant, animal, human (the two latter grades with the inclusion of spiritual phenomena, Book I, § 31 ff.); the fundamental law by which all life is influenced by heredity, environment and, in great measure, by methodic nurture, is applicable in practically the same way to all three grades. We can draw conclusions from the lower grades to the higher—just as Mendel's law, to which we referred, was based on experiments on plants and applied to the higher grades. On these premises Jehuda Halevi is able to give biologic explanations of even the loftiest phenomena of human spiritual life. It is true that according to Jehuda Halevi (Book I, § 41) the prophet is as far above the ordinary man as man is above the beast—the beast above the plant—the plant above the stone—not as an individual, but in his quality as bearer of special gifts (Book I, § 95 end). But even the highest life is still life, indeed life in intensified form (see p. 140) and subject to the same laws as all other life, i.e. it is conditioned by blood, earth and nurture; it develops solely within the chain of mankind that extends from Adam through Shem to Abraham and Jacob; it attains to full strength only in the case of men connected with the Holy Land and with those practices that God has ordained for the fostering of His 'fire', i.e. of His enlightening influence on the prophetic spirit of man (Book II, § 26). Thus belief in the reality of the facts of religion in no way requires of us a 'sacrificium

intellectus'; the miracle that came to light in its lowest form of development in plant life becomes more and more apparent as it passes through the animal to the human and thence to the prophetic life; but the domination in the highest spheres of the same laws as were seen to govern in the lower realms of life is consistent with the claims of analogical schools of thought,¹ and is corroborated by the testimony of history. From this fact we arrive at a solution of the religious and national problem of Judaism. The fact that God is near to man and desires his 'nearness' is shown by the history of the religious 'nucleus' of mankind, particularly since the appearance of Abraham, who is recognized by the devotees of all three religions as the model of faith and trust in God. The status of Judaism now also becomes clear. Its pre-eminence still prevails—even though God's favour at present recedes for lack of the conditions with which it is bound up, namely land and temple-cult. But the seed of heritage will inevitably open out again in full blossom, when the conditions are renewed; not only historical tradition, but also prophetic hope will be fully recognized and justified by scientific knowledge; even at the present day the Jew experiences a flash of the dormant spark in the effect of such laws as were given to cultivate the prophetic spirit, namely the laws governing the Sabbath and prayer, as also through settlement on the Holy soil of Palestine.

This line of thought in the *Kuzari* finds its complement in the poems, of which we give a few examples. If the *Kuzari* may be said to show the poet as a thinker, the reverse holds true of the poems; just as reading in the former we realize that Halevi does not disdain to clothe his intuitive feeling in the garment of thought, so in the latter he builds up on the foundation of clear thinking a genuine religious life, comprising the apprehension of God, of Sabbath, and of Zion.

What, then, is Jehuda Halevi's message to mankind today?

Naturally he is to a large extent limited by the theories of his time. We know, it is true, that his attitude to the Greek

¹ In Arabic 'analogic thought' (*qias*) often stands for thought in general. The notion often occurs in the *Kuzari*.

philosophy of nature was that of a very critical outsider. 'Because they furnish proofs concerning logic and mathematics, people accept everything they say concerning physics and metaphysics. Why did you not doubt their theories of the four elements, their search of the fire-world in which they place the etherial fire . . . ?' Considering the high authority these doctrines generally commanded in the Middle Ages, we can appreciate the breath of fresh air that was stirred by Jehuda Halevi's criticism.

Nevertheless, as regards his religious views in particular, Jehuda Halevi is unmistakably rooted in medievalism, to a greater extent even than most of the other Jewish philosophers of the time, in one particular point: in his attempt to build up religion on tradition and particularly on the belief in miracles instead of on reasoned considerations. He defends this method of thought by referring to the generally accepted views of his age; even before the advocate of Judaism comes forward, the King declares (Book I, § 8) that miracles alone could convince him of God's sway over world happenings. As late as the nineteenth century, no less a thinker than Dean Mansel takes up the same standpoint in his Bampton Lectures.¹ On the other hand, Maimonides, believing as he did in Biblical miracles, may have doubted whether these Bible accounts were more likely to convince sceptics than the arguments of philosophers; to him—as to most present-day believers—the miracle was perhaps the 'best beloved child' of faith, but not its father!

Although we have here a fundamental difference of opinion between Jehuda Halevi and the majority of his present-day readers, there are two qualifying considerations:

(1) Among the historical miracles to which Jehuda Halevi refers, there are two that he places in the foreground: the miracle of the preservation of Israel and the miracle of

¹ Cf. the polemic against him in Bevan's *Symbolism and Belief* (1938), 318 ff. Perhaps Björnson's *Beyond Power* is even better able to enlighten the modern reader on Jehuda Halevi's mode of thought. According to I, § 65, the Biblical theory of creation would have appealed even to Aristotle, had he known it.

prophecy. To the same two facts religious significance has not infrequently been attached in recent times.¹ In particular, a German philosopher, Heinrich Scholz,² sees in the revelation of the prophets, which cannot possibly be explained away as an illusion, the most reliable evidence of the truth of religion.

(2) Jehuda Halevi is far from seeking God only in miracles!³ Divine power, it is true, only attains full and convincing penetration on the highest rung of the ladder of organisms (*see* Commentary to Book I, § 31 ff.). But it is always one and the same, in whatever guise it appears, just as light remains the same although it penetrates bodies in varying degrees of strength, displaying its supreme force in the pearl (Book IV, § 15). He who has discovered God in the abnormal will recognize Him also in the 'wonders of every day' (as enumerated in the daily prayers of the Jews, and in Lessing's *Nathan* 1, 2), in the structure of organisms, which are in no way to be ascribed to an impersonal 'nature' as distinguished from God (Book I, § 69), and in the religious urge of every individual, to which the *Kuzari* and the poems, such as Song I (on p. 132), bear witness.

This then is the first point in which Jehuda Halevi appears to address us as a contemporary: the recognition of the intrinsic value of religion. Jehuda Halevi makes a much sharper distinction than those who think on similar lines between the philosophic and religious conceptions of God. He who has mustered the proofs of God's existence is, according to him, still far from attaining to true religion; for otherwise prophets would be found mainly among the philosophers (*see* p. 13).

¹ Cf., e.g., Fleming James, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (1943) 1: 'If we can believe in the possibility of any miracles, two facts . . . may well bear that name. One is the Jewish people. . . . The second is Judaism, the religion by virtue of which this people are what they are. Both facts trace their origin to one man.'

² *Philosophy of Religion*, 1st edition (the only one available to me here), 1921.

³ We refer again to Björnson's *Beyond Power*.

The indisputable rightness of the reasoning is apparent to us who are better able to survey the history of philosophy. The classic land of philosophers was Greece; and it is amongst the Greeks (and not, as Jehuda Halevi still believed, Book I; § 63, in the Orient) that the roots of philosophic and metaphysical speculation are to be sought. Yet the classic heroes of religion did not proceed from the Greeks, but from a people who, by its very nature, was even far less susceptible to philosophy than Jehuda Halevi suspected. The experience of history goes to show that intensification of philosophic wisdom has by no means always led to an intensification of religious life and vice versa. Religious life is nurtured by sources quite other than philosophy; and Jehuda Halevi is absolutely right in this fundamental theory, as we can testify today—far righter than he knew.

The same applies to his answer as to what these sources may be. The two answers he gives reappear in modern schools of thought; here indeed, by virtue of the refined method of psychological analysis, they appear much clearer and more convincing in their formulation; indeed, it seems desirable that we should proceed from this conception, which is so much more clearly comprehensible to us, to investigate those of medieval philosophers with all their implications.

The first answer deals with the peculiarity of religious *experience*. It bases itself partly on such works as William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which remains on the high planes of religious emotion, and partly on Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*, which does justice to the character of every kind of religious experience. Although it may be said that both these works are mainly descriptive in character, their arguments serve to establish psychology as the foundation of all religion. 'It (the religious sentiment) may be entirely absent from some, who are insensitive to its peculiar flavour, or only faintly sensitive; a man may be partially or wholly deity-blind as he is stone-deaf . . . ; yet most are susceptible to it in their degree as most see colours and not mere grays.'¹

¹ S. Alexander: *Space, Time and Deity* (1920), II, 378.

He who is capable of such an experience will believe in the reality of the world which affects us¹; he may admit that the philosopher is his superior as regards clarity of conception²; but philosophic knowledge is not an essential pre-requisite of the experience itself or of his conviction of it.

From this idea we can appraise certain thoughts of Jehuda Halevi which are among the most fundamental of the whole book; primarily the distinction between Aristotle's God, to whom 'speculation alone conduces', and the God of Abraham, to whom the soul yearns (Book IV, § 16),³ and the comparison of the religious genius to the poetic genius, who, though not capable of giving any account of the laws of his art like the metric expert, senses it within himself and has the power of kindling the spark of the artist's exaltation in the hearts of others likewise gifted.⁴ This in no way implies any antagonistic attitude to thought—any more than is the case with the more recent thinkers mentioned above. In the last quoted passage⁵ Jehuda Halevi attributes to philosophy an apologetic value; and he attaches great importance to the statement that Judaism contains nothing opposed to reason and experience (see Book I, §§ 67, 89). Nevertheless he realizes that thought in itself can as little produce religion as art: religion is more than metaphysics; it has its roots in those depths of the soul that thought can discuss but cannot reach.

Still further removed from rationalism than the psychological justification of all piety, is the second answer to the question on the sources of religion. This answer rests on the analysis of the belief in revelation, an analysis particularly well

¹ 'That which produces effects within another reality, must be termed a reality itself' (a quotation from James by Alexander).

² Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*. See beginning.

³ In the same way Scholz, p. 434, distinguishes between the 'Absolute' in philosophy and the 'Divine' in religion. A near approach to this occurs in one of Pascal's Confessions to the 'Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob, non des philosophes et des savants' (quoted in Bornhausen, *Offenbarung*, p. 143).

⁴ V. § 16; cf. our note.

⁵ Likewise at the beginning of Book V.

represented in the 'dialectic theology' of the present day.¹ According to this school neither thought nor mysticism, i.e. sentiment, can produce the true religious revelation, but only 'the word', i.e. revelation, particularly the completely paradoxical message of the gospels. This harsh attitude to the 'natural' powers of humanity has its root, of course, in Paulinism, and has found but little support among scholars in Jewry.² Neither does Jehuda Halevi share this opinion. Nevertheless he lays great stress on the fact that religious perception, in the full sense of the word, according to the Bible, was only possible from the earliest times on the basis of the word addressed by God to Man, and that it includes matters (particularly commands) for the complete comprehension of which our natural faculties do not suffice; thus no road leads to the Father—but through the Father Himself (Book I, § 98).

The point of the paradox, however, in as far as this is one, is blunted by Jehuda Halevi's remark that we cannot produce the conditions of all life *a priori* through deductions of reason; rather must we humbly learn the secret from experience, however strange and foreign to us the latter may seem.³ His irrationalism appears in truth as a radical empiricism, an acknowledgement of the fact that the classical representatives of religion, the prophets, felt themselves addressed, indeed overpowered, by a power above them⁴ and that it was on the ground of their teachings that full religious experience was evolved.

¹ In the following, reference is made to E. Brunner 'Die Mystik und das Wort', a discussion on Schleiermacher, whom Rudolf Otto rightly calls his forerunner.

² In the nineteenth century K. L. Steinheim, whose doctrine has been revived recently by H. J. Schoeps, comes very near to it.

³ In occasional remarks (Book II, §§ 23 a. 25) omitted in our selection, Jehuda Halevi reminds us of the incomprehensibility of the generating process; and yet we must rely on experience in contrast to the 'alchemists' who presume to make bees out of beef (we would add: a homunculus out of a retort).

⁴ Cf. Heschel's *Prophetie* 1936, p. 42 ff, as a scholarly justification of this conception; he quotes recent literature, but refers also to the stress on the connection between prophecy and poetry in medieval Judaism.

The inadequacy of philosophical theology is also manifest in the *form* of the doctrine of God. Of course, Jehuda Halevi agrees, with the philosophers, on the impossibility of ascribing to God any human qualities in the literal sense (Book II, § 2). But he thinks they make a big mistake if they infer from this that it is wrong or even merely superfluous to speak of God in human images (Book IV, § 3). Images such as the prophets envisaged by virtue of their creative power are indispensable for the implanting in our souls of the proper awe of God.¹ Here also Jehuda Halevi is on common ground with the more recent psychological attitude to religious thought, according to which the notion of God can be expressed only through anthropomorphic images; an image such as 'God's hand' or the apostrophizing of God as light has more effect upon us than all abstractions.

This insight into the relative value of anthropomorphism, combined with the insistence on a purely spiritual notion of God, conduces to a deeper understanding of *cult*. For all cult depends on the assumption that the presence of God should become particularly manifest at a certain place,² and on the need of 'honouring Him at close hand', as a stoic philosopher of ancient times who despised anthropomorphism expressed it.³ And cult is a matter affecting the community. Although Jehuda Halevi was a master of individual prayer (Song I (p. 132) suffices to prove this), he nevertheless fully recognizes the advantage of communal prayer in very proper appreciation of the fact that religion, though it is the personal affair of every human being,⁴ nevertheless tends much more strongly to communal culture and communal participation than does philosophy, in as far as the latter does not bear a religious

¹ See our commentary on the beginning of Book IV where reference is made to Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (1938).

² Cf. Book I, § 97. He has particularly in mind the worship of the Kaaba.

³ Dion of Prusa 12, 60, draws his inspiration from him.

⁴ Whitehead, *Religion in its Making* (1926) 6, 37, 48; but cf. pp. 12, 17, 18 on religion as a 'social phenomenon'.

character.¹ Herewith a definite breach is made in the tendency of the Middle Ages to put religion on a par with metaphysics, and a foundation is laid for the true understanding of *all* religious phenomena. Religion is not merely abstract doctrine, the highest outcome of which is the meditation of certain choice spirits; it is union with God, resting on the experience of our emotions and on the message of history, strengthened through common service. It finds therefore its justification not in metaphysical speculation, whose powers of persuasion were disputed in its own philosophic circles, but in the religious disposition of man and in the facts of the history of religion. But as surely as religion is more than metaphysics, *so Judaism is more than religion*. As in the question regarding the essence of religion, so also in the question as to the essence of Judaism, Jehuda Halevi attacks, in his peculiar way, a problem that affects our own time not less than the Middle Ages.

In as far as Jehuda Halevi declares Judaism to be the absolute religion, as opposed to which Christianity and Islam can only claim to be devitalized imitations (Book III, § 8 ff.) or preparatory stages (Book IV, § 23), he formally adopts the line of thought of the whole Middle Ages, in which the religious wars, as he himself stresses (Book I, § 2), were based on the belief in one absolute religion. But he goes beyond the thinkers of his time by giving pre-eminence to his own religion, not only, for example, on the lines of his contemporary and fellow-countryman Abraham ibn Daûd, who in his book on *Exalted Religion* stresses the reasonableness of Judaism, but on physiological grounds; the non-Jew who is converted to Judaism is therefore not quite on a par with the born Jew (in contrast to Maimonides); and it is only in Palestine that Jewish culture can open out again in full glory. But this expansion includes secular culture; that 'pick' of mankind to which Israel also belongs is at the same time the root-basis of philosophy, which the Greeks only took over from the East; even the Hebrew language has its own peculiar advantages (Book II,

¹ This was the case in certain schools of philosophy in Greece, especially the Pythagorean.

§ 67 ff.). This does not imply any blind satisfaction with the Israel of the present. Quite apart from the fact that Jehuda Halevi admits, as we know, 'recessive phenomena' within the pick of mankind, he remains absolutely loyal to the religious interpretation of the Galuth as the penalty for our sin: it is inflicted upon us in order to train us in the ways of humility (Book I, § 115), and to foster in us an intense yearning for Eretz Israel (Book V, § 27); with deep pain, he admits that the Jewish nation does not realize this significance of its fate; it settles down quite comfortably in the Diaspora instead of responding with a willing spirit to the Divine plan of education. It is, in fact, this most characteristic reproof, together with Jehuda Halevi's determination to draw the consequences of the yearning for Eretz Israel, that illustrates the inseparable connection he makes between the religious values of Israel and its national existence, showing that religious revival of the nation is bound up with the recognition and the abolition of its national calamity; that is to say, it is in no way only bound up with spiritual and ethical enlightenment. Michael Sachs is therefore quite justified in terming Jehuda Halevi 'the most national and the most patriotic of all Jewish poets'.

Jehuda Halevi's nationalism is, as we have seen, nurtured in the soil of Greek biology. The glowing iron of his love for Israel has been welded into steel in the bath of international philosophy. Herein lies the peculiar distinction of his way of thought—the connection between the nation and the faith of Israel being assumed as no longer accidental and arbitrary but as essential—but herein also its mistake. The laws of historical happening cannot be laid down hard and fast like the laws of nature. Eclipses of the sun, both past and future, can be calculated to the second; the cultural development of a nation cannot be foretold nor, as far as we know from history, can it be grasped as the *inevitable* consequence of factors known to us. This applies particularly to Jehuda Halevi's conception of history. Just as surely as the Bible—and it is only as a Bible exponent that Jehuda Halevi claims to count—recognizes special merits of the Israelite group of mankind, just as little

does it universally connect prophecy or piety or even the peculiar Divine direction with these factors: we need only refer to the book of Jonah, wherein Jew and Heathen alike are judged according to their behaviour, the heathens appearing no less God-fearing than the prophet. By interpreting the free will of God displayed in the selection of Israel and Palestine as a causal necessity, Jehuda Halevi invests the notion of selection with a crudeness that he himself finds undesirable (Book I, § 28—‘your words are poor after having been rich’) and that, in fact, detracts from the weight of his psychological justification of religion, to which we have just referred; the fact that he does not insist in his story on this exclusiveness of the religious prerogative as formulated by him in Book I, § 115, speaks well for him and for his rootedness in the real Bible heritage: he presents the heathen King of the Khazars as honoured by Divine apparition!

But the clear admission of Jehuda Halevi’s over-emphasis inevitably leads us to the recognition of the rightness of his method. For life, as history depicts it, is unquestionably dependent on natural factors; and unaffected by theoretic (or even practical) over-emphasis, the true essential of all nationalism remains the faith in this—that all the cultural characteristics of a people are organically bound up with each other and with the men who have produced them. Even if the belief in revelation is simply taken as the foundation of the religion of Israel, there yet remains that interconnection between faith and people that is stressed in a well-known Midrash, according to which God offered the Torah to all the nations, who refused it each for a reason of its own.

Jehuda Halevi also sees the pre-eminence of his people not in creative force, but in religious aptitude; he held it to be important that this pre-eminence attained its full development in the days of unclouded national freedom, and that it is promised renewal after the return of such freedom; for, like the Hebrew language (Book II, § 68), Jewish culture in its entirety was impoverished by the impoverishment of its bearers (*cf.* Book I, § 12). Hence, on the one hand, his pride in

Jewish blood and belief in the duty of national preservation for the sake of mankind; on the other hand, his deep consciousness of the unnaturalness of the present-day position of Judaism: we seem to hear Ahad Haam in Jehuda Halevi's statement that the nation is in slavery (Book V, § 25) although individual Jews may fare so well that they do not want to sever themselves from their business and their houses (Book II, § 24); he touches us all to the quick when he hopes that even now, before the final redemption, a healthier and a fuller Jewish life may open up for our people in Palestine.

As an empiricist in the broadest sense of the word, comprising spiritual reality, Jehuda Halevi refuses to interpret his Jewish consciousness in a *purely* religious guise, or to force the religious into the Procrustean bed of a theology subject to philosophic proof. Posterity's opinion of him is based on this peculiarity of his. Whereas in recent times rationalism has focused its main attention on Maimonides, the great representative of philosophic eros, Jehuda Halevi's influence affected above all men of artistic distinction. Michael Sachs¹ evoked his spirit, as we have already mentioned, against 'Israelites of the nineteenth century' whose bartering and trading tendencies induced them to sacrifice the past and future of Judaism to emancipation. A spark of the pure flame of his enthusiasm falls upon the spirit of Heinrich Heine, who represents Jehuda Halevi in the 'Romanzero' as the knight of the sad and beautiful dame Jerusalem and as the poet of the Sabbath, although here, as always, he drowns his own 'Judenleid' in the jingle of the fool's bells.² And in the commentary to the translation of Jehuda Halevi's poems³ which Franz Rosenzweig sets as an 'accompaniment' to the melodies of the poet, the belief in the peculiarity of the Jewish people stands out no less strongly than in the Kuzari; and Rosenzweig protests with even greater emphasis than the Kuzari against all attempts to apprehend Judaism in merely theologic abstractions.

¹ Sachs, *Die Religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien*, 2nd ed., p. 300.

² Cf. Poem No. II, (p. 133), and commentary on p. 139 f.

³ Jehuda Halevi, *92 Hymnen und Gedichte*, p. 223.

This, then, is the extent of Jehuda Halevi's intentional and actual influence on his descendants. He teaches us to be on our guard against deceptive solutions of the religious and the Jewish problems, and, in the contemplation of our past with critical reference to his own line of thought, to discover the right question and the right answer.

KUZARI
A BOOK OF PROOF AND ARGUMENT:
AN APOLOGY
FOR A DESPISED RELIGION

BOOK I
NON-JEWISH RELIGIONS

1. I was asked to state what arguments I could bring to bear against the attacks of philosophers and followers of other religions which differ from ours and against the sectaries who differ from the majority of Israel. And I remembered the arguments I had heard of a Rabbi who sojourned with the King of the Khazars, who, as we know from historical records, became a convert to Judaism about four hundred years ago: to him there appeared repeatedly a dream, in which it seemed as if an angel addressed him saying: 'Thy (intention) is indeed pleasing to the Creator, but thy way of acting is not pleasing'. Yet he was so zealous in the performance of the Khazar religion, that he devoted himself with a perfect heart to the service of the temple and the sacrifices. Notwithstanding this devotion, the angel came again at night and repeated: 'thy intention is indeed pleasing, but thy way of acting is not pleasing'. This induced him to ponder over the different beliefs and religions, and finally he became a convert to Judaism together with many other Khazars. As I found among the arguments of the Rabbi many which appealed to me and were in harmony with my opinions, I resolved to write them down as they had been spoken. The intelligent will understand me.

It is related: when the King of Khazar dreamt that his intention was pleasing to God, but his way of acting was not pleasing, and was commanded in the same dream to seek the work that would please God, he inquired of a *philosopher* concerning his persuasion. THE PHILOSOPHER replied:

There is no favour or dislike in God, because He is above desire and intention. For an intention intimates a desire in the

intending person: by the fulfilment of this desire he becomes complete; as long as it remains unfulfilled, he is incomplete. In a similar way God is, in the opinion of the philosophers, above the knowledge of individuals, because they change with the times and there is no change in God's knowledge. He does not know thee, much less thy intentions and actions, nor does He listen to thy prayers or see thy movements. Even if philosophers say that He created thee, they only speak in metaphor, because He is the cause of causes in the creation of all creatures, but not because this was His intention from the beginning. He never created man, for the world is without beginning, and no man arose other than through one who came into existence before him; in every man we find united physical and intellectual qualities deriving from his parents and other relations not discounting the influence of winds, countries, foods and water, spheres, stars and constellations. Everything is reduced to the Prime Cause—not to a Will proceeding from it, but to an Emanation, from which emanated a second, a third, and a fourth cause. The causes and the things caused are, as thou seest, intimately connected with one another; their connection is as eternal as the Prime Cause and has no beginning. Therefore, every individual on earth has its completing causes; consequently an individual with perfect causes becomes perfect and another with imperfect causes remains imperfect, e.g. the negro is fit to receive nothing more than human shape and speech in its least developed form; the philosopher, however, who is equipped with the highest capacity, derives therefrom moral, intellectual and active advantages, so that he wants nothing to make him perfect. But these perfections exist only in the form of latent powers which require instruction and training to become active, bringing to light this capacity, in all its completeness or with its deficiencies and innumerable grades. To the perfect person there adheres a light of Divine nature, called Active Intellect; his Passive Intellect cleaves so closely to it that it considers itself to be one with the Active Intellect. His organs—I mean the limbs of such a person—only serve the most perfect purposes, at the most appropriate time,

and in the best condition, as though they were organs of the Active Intellect, not of the potential and Passive Intellect, which made use of them at an earlier period, sometimes well, but more often improperly. This degree is the ultimate and most longed-for goal for the perfect man, whose soul, purified of doubts, grasps the inward truth of science. The soul becomes the equal of an angel, and finds a place on the nethermost step of seraphic beings. This is what is called, allusively and approximately, God's pleasure. Endeavour to reach it and to reach the true knowledge of things, in order that thy intellect may become active. Keep to the just way, as regards character and action, because this will help thee to effect truth, to gain instruction, and to become like this Active Intellect. The consequence of this will be contentment, humility, meekness and every other praiseworthy inclination, accompanied by the veneration of the Prime Cause, not in order to receive favour from it or to divert its wrath, but solely to become like the Active Intellect. If thou hast reached such disposition of belief, be not concerned about the forms of thy humility, worship and benediction—nor fashion thy religion according to the laws of reason set up by philosophers, but strive after purity of the soul. Then thou wilt reach thy goal, viz. union with the Active Intellect. Maybe he will communicate with thee or teach thee the knowledge of what is hidden through true dreams and positive visions.

2. THE KHAZARI: Thy speech is convincing, yet it does not correspond to what I desire to find. I know already that my soul is pure and that my actions are directed to gain the favour of God. To all this I received the answer that this way of acting does not find favour, though the intention does. There must no doubt be a way of acting, pleasing in itself, and not through the medium of intention. If this be not so, why then do Christian and Moslem, who divided the inhabited world between them, fight with one another, each of them serving his God with pure intention, living either as monks or hermits, fasting and praying? It is, however, impossible to agree with both.

3. THE PHILOSOPHER: The philosopher's creed knows no manslaughter, cultivating only the intellect.

4. THE KHAZARI: And what could be more erroneous, in the opinion of the philosophers, than the belief that the world was created, and that in six days; or that the Prime Cause spoke with mortals—in view of the philosophical doctrine, which declares God to be above knowing details. Moreover, one might expect the gift of prophecy to be quite common among philosophers, considering their deeds, their knowledge, their researches after truth, their exertions and their close connection with all things spiritual; one might also expect that wonders, miracles, and extraordinary things would be reported of them. Yet we find that true visions are granted to persons who do not devote themselves to study or the purification of their souls. This proves that between the Divine power and the soul there are secret relations which are not identical with those thou mentionedst, O Philosopher!

After this the Khazari said to himself: I will ask the Christians and the Moslems, since one of these ways of acting is, no doubt, the God-pleasing one. But as regards the Jews, I am satisfied that they are of low station, few in number, and generally hated. He then invited a Christian scholar and questioned him about his doctrine and his practice.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR: I believe that all things are created, whilst the Creator is eternal; that He created the whole world in six days; that all mankind sprang from Adam, and after him from Noah; that God takes care of the created beings, and keeps in touch with man; that He is wrathful, takes delight, and is merciful; that He speaks, appears and reveals Himself to His prophets and favoured ones; that He dwells among those who please Him. In short: I believe in all that is written in the Torah and the other books of the Israelites, which are undisputed, because they are generally accepted as everlasting and have been revealed before a vast multitude. Subsequently the Divinity became embodied in the womb of a noble Israelite virgin; she bore Him having the semblance of

a human being, which concealed nevertheless a divinity, seemingly a prophet, but in reality a God sent forth. He is the Messiah, whom we call the Son of God, and He is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. We believe in His unity, although the Trinity appears on our tongues. We believe in Him and in His abode among the Israelites; this was granted to them as a distinction, because the Divine influence never ceased to be attached to them—until their masses rebelled against this Messiah, and they crucified Him. Then Divine wrath burdened them everlasting, whilst the favour was confined to a few who followed the Messiah, and to those nations which followed these few. We belong to their number. Although we are not of Israelitish descent, we are well deserving of being called Israelites, because we follow the Messiah and his twelve Israelite companions, who took the place of the tribes. Our laws and regulations are derived from the apostle Simon (Petrus) and from ordinations taken from the Torah, which we study, for its truth and Divine origin are indisputable. It is also stated in the Gospel by the Messiah: I came not to destroy one of the laws of Moses, but I came to confirm and corroborate them.

5. THE KHAZARI: Here is no logical conclusion; nay, logical thought rejects most of what thou sayest. It is only when both appearance and experience are so palpable that they grip the whole heart, which sees no way of contesting, that it will agree to the difficult, and the remote will become near. This is how naturalists deal with strange powers which come upon them unawares; they would not believe if they only heard of them without seeing them; but when they see them, they discuss them, and ascribe them to the influence of stars or spirits, because they cannot disprove ocular evidence. As for me, I cannot accept these things, because they come upon me suddenly, seeing that I have not grown up in them. My duty is, therefore, to investigate further.

He then invited one of the scholars of Islam and questioned him about his doctrine and his practice.

THE MOSLEM SCHOLAR: We acknowledge the Unity and Eternity of God and that all men are derived from Adam and Noah. We absolutely reject embodiment (of God), and if any element of this appears in the Writ, we explain it as metaphoric, serving to make the doctrine acceptable to our comprehension. At the same time we maintain that our Book is the Speech of God, being itself a miracle which we are bound to accept for its own sake, since no one is able to produce anything comparable to it, or to one of its verses. Our prophet is the Seal of the prophets, who abrogated every previous law, and invited all nations to embrace Islam. The reward of the pious consists in the return of his spirit to his body in Paradise and bliss, where he never ceases to enjoy eating, drinking, women's love, and anything he may desire. The requital of the disobedient consists in being condemned to fire, and his punishment knows no end.

6. THE KHAZARI: If anyone is to be guided in matters divine, and to be convinced that God speaks to man, whilst he considers it improbable, he must be convinced by facts which are generally known and which allow of no refutation. And if your book is a miracle—a non-Arab, as I am, cannot perceive its miraculous character, because it is written in Arabic.

7. THE MOSLEM SCHOLAR: Yet miracles are performed by the Prophet, but they are not used as evidence for the acceptance of his Law.

8. THE KHAZARI: Yes, the human mind does not incline to believe that God has intercourse with man, except by a miracle which changes the nature of things, so that man may recognize that God alone is able to do so, who created him from nought. Such a miracle must also have taken place in the presence of great multitudes, who saw it distinctly. Then it is possible for the mind to grasp this extraordinary matter, viz. that the Creator of this world and the next, of the heavens and lights, should hold intercourse with this contemptible subject, I mean man, speaking to him, and fulfilling his wishes and desires.

9. **THE MOSLEM SCHOLAR:** Is not our Book full of stories of Moses and the Israelites? No one denies what He did to Pharaoh, how He divided the sea, saved those who enjoyed His favour, but drowned those who aroused His wrath, that he granted them manna and the quails during forty years, that He spoke to Moses on the mount (Sinai), that He made the sun stand still for Joshua, and assisted him against the giants; nor do they deny what happened previously, viz. the Flood and the destruction of the fellow-citizens of Lot. Is this not so well known that no suspicion of deceit and imagination is possible?

10. **THE KHAZARI:** Indeed I see myself compelled to ask the Jews, because they are the descendants of the Israelites. For I see that they constitute in themselves the evidence for a divine law on earth.

He then invited a Rabbi and asked him about his belief.

THE BASIS OF JEWISH FAITH

11. **THE RABBI:** I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, who led the Israelites out of Egypt with signs and miracles; who fed them in the desert and gave them the (Holy) Land, after having made them traverse the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way; who sent Moses with His Law, and subsequently thousands of prophets, who confirmed His law by promises to those who observed, and threats to the disobedient. We believe in what is contained in the Torah—a very large domain.

12. **THE KHAZARI:** I had intended from the very beginning not to ask any Jew, because I am aware of the destruction of their books and of their narrow-minded views, their misfortunes having deprived them of all commendable qualities. Shouldst thou, O Jew, not have said that thou believest in the Creator of the world, its Governor and Guide, who created and keeps thee, and such attributes which serve as evidence for every believer, and for the sake of which he

pursues justice in order to resemble the Creator in His wisdom and justice?

13. THE RABBI: That which thou dost express is speculative and political religion, to which inquiry leads; but this is open to many doubts. Now ask the philosophers, and thou wilt find that they do not agree on one action or on one principle, since they rely on theories; some of these can be established by arguments, some of them are only plausible, some even less capable of being proved.

14. THE KHAZARI: That which thou sayest now, O Jew, seems to me better than the beginning, and I should like to hear more.

15. THE RABBI: But the beginning of my speech was the very proof, yea, the evidence, which makes every argument superfluous.

16. THE KHAZARI: How so?

17. THE RABBI: Allow me to make a few preliminary remarks; for I see thee disregarding and depreciating my words.

18. THE KHAZARI: Let me hear thy remarks.

19. THE RABBI: If thou wert told that the King of India was an excellent man, commanding admiration, and deserving reputation, only because his actions were reflected in the justice which rules his country and the virtuous ways of his subjects, would this compel you to revere him?

20. THE KHAZARI: How could this compel me, whilst I am not sure if the justice of the Indian people is natural and not dependent on their king, or due to the king, or both?

21. THE RABBI: But if his messenger came to thee bringing presents which thou knowest to be only procurable in India, and in the royal palace, accompanied by a letter in which it is distinctly stated from whom it comes, and to which are added drugs to cure thy diseases, to preserve thy health, poisons for thine enemies, and other means to fight and kill them without battle, would this make thee beholden to him?

22. **THE KHAZARI:** Certainly. For this would remove my former doubt that the Indians have a king. I should also acknowledge that his dominion and his word had touched me.

23. **THE RABBI:** How wouldest thou then, if asked, describe him?

24. **THE KHAZARI:** In such terms as were quite clear to me; and I would add such as were at first rather doubtful, but which were later affirmed by the former.

25. **THE RABBI:** In this way I answered thy question. In the same strain Moses spoke to Pharaoh, when he told him 'The God of the Hebrews sent me to thee'—viz. the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For the story of their life was well known to the nations, who also knew that the Divine power was in contact with the Patriarchs, caring for them and performing miracles for them. He did not say: 'The God of heaven and earth' nor 'my Creator and thine sent me'. In the same way God commenced His speech to the assembled people of Israel: 'I am the God whom you worship, who hath led you out of the land of Egypt'; He did not say 'I am the Creator of the world and your Creator'. In the same style I spoke to thee, O Prince of the Khazars, when thou didst ask me about my creed. I made mention to thee of what is convincing for me and for the whole of Israel, who knew these things, first through personal experience, and afterward through an uninterrupted tradition, which is equal to experience.

26. **THE KHAZARI:** Then your belief is confined to yourselves?

27. **THE RABBI:** Yes. Any Gentile who joins us sincerely shares our good fortune, but he is not equal to us. If the Torah were binding on us because God created us, the white and the black man would be equal since He created them all. But the Torah (is binding) because He led us out of Egypt and remained attached to us. For we are the pick of mankind.

28. **THE KHAZARI:** I see thee quite altered, O Jew, and thy words are poor after having been so rich.

29. THE RABBI: The poorest ones will become the richest, if thou givest me thy attention, until I have expressed myself more fully.

30. THE KHAZARI: Say what thou wilt.

31. THE RABBI: The (realm of) the organic power comprises nurture, growth, and propagation with their powers and all conditions attached thereto. To this belong plants and animals, to the exclusion of earth, stones, metals, and elements.

32. THE KHAZARI: This is a maxim which requires explanation, but it is true.

33. THE RABBI: Likewise, the realm of the soul's power, expressed in movement, willed action, external and internal senses and such like, is limited to all animated beings.

34. THE KHAZARI: This, too, cannot be contradicted.

35. THE RABBI: Likewise, the intellectual power distinguishes man above all living beings, it leads to the ennobling of his character, to the administration of his home and his country, to government and legislation.

36. THE KHAZARI: This is also true.

37. THE RABBI: And which would be the degree higher than this?

38. THE KHAZARI: The degree of great scholars.

39. THE RABBI: I only mean a degree which distinguishes those who occupy it essentially, as the plant is distinguished from inorganic things, a man from animals. The differences in quantity, however, are innumerable, but are purely accidental, and do not constitute a degree in the true sense.

40. THE KHAZARI: If this be so, then there is no degree above man among tangible things.

41. THE RABBI: And if we find a man who walks into the fire without hurt, or abstains from food for some time without starving, on whose face a light shines which the eye cannot bear,

who is never ill, nor ages—and when he reaches his life's end, dies spontaneously just as a man retires to his couch to sleep on an appointed day and hour, equipped with the knowledge of what is hidden as to past and future: is such a degree not essentially distinguished from the human degree?

42. **THE KHAZARI:** This degree would be divine and seraphic, if it existed. It would belong to the province of Divine power, not to that of the intellectual, spiritual (soulful) or natural one.

43. **THE RABBI:** These are some of the characteristics of the undoubted prophet. Through him God made manifest to the people that He is in connection with them, that there is a Lord who guides them as He wishes, according to their obedience or disobedience. He revealed that which was hidden and taught how the world was created, how the generations prior to the Flood followed each other and how man descended from Adam. He described the Flood and the origin of the Seventy nations from Shem, Ham and Japhet, the sons of Noah; how the languages were split up, and where men sought their habitations; how arts arose and how cities were built—and the chronology from Adam up to this day.

ETERNITY OF THE WORLD: NATURE AND GOD

62. **THE KHAZARI:** What is thy opinion of the philosophers, who, after careful investigation, agree that the world is without beginning?

63. **THE RABBI:** We cannot reproach the philosophers, because they inherited neither science nor religion. Being Grecians, they belong to the descendants of Japhet, who inhabited the north; whereas (that) knowledge coming from Adam, and sustained by Divine power, is only to be found among the progeny of Shem, who were the 'pick' of Noah's descendants; this knowledge has always been connected with this 'pick' of mankind and will always remain so. The Greeks

only received it, when they became powerful, from the Persians, who had it from the Chaldeans. It was only then that famous philosophers arose in their midst; but from the moment that Rome assumed political leadership, the Greeks produced no famous philosopher.

64. THE KHAZARI: Does this mean that Aristotle's investigations are not deserving of credence?

65. THE RABBI: Yes. He exerted his mind, because he had no reliable tradition at his disposal. He meditated on the beginning and end of the world, but found difficulty in accepting a theory of the beginning as well as of eternity. Finally, he preferred those abstract speculations which pointed to eternity, and he found no reason to inquire into chronology. Had he lived among a people with well-authenticated and generally acknowledged traditions, he would have applied his deductions and arguments to the establishment of a theory of creation, however difficult, rather than to one of eternity, which is even more difficult to accept.

66. THE KHAZARI: Is there any decisive proof?

67. THE RABBI: Where could proof of such a problem be found? Heaven forbid that there should be anything in the Torah to contradict that which is manifest or proved! On the other hand it tells of miracles and the transformations of the normal cause of things, either through new creations or by changing one thing into another, to testify to the power of the Creator, who accomplishes whatever He wills, and whenever He wills it. The question of eternity and creation is obscure, and the arguments are evenly balanced. The theory of creation is outbalanced by the prophetic tradition of Adam, Noah, and Moses, which is more deserving of credence than speculation founded on analogies. But if, after all, a believer in the Torah finds himself compelled to admit an eternal substance and the existence of many worlds prior to this one, this would not affect his belief in that *this* world was created at a certain epoch, and that Adam and Noah were the first human beings.

68. **THE KHAZARI:** Thus far I find these arguments satisfactory. Now take up the thread of thy earlier exposition. How came about the great conviction that the Creator of bodies, spirits, souls, intellects and angels—He who is too high, holy and exalted for the mind still less for the senses to grasp—that He holds intercourse with creatures, wonderful as their form may appear? For in the smallest worm there are revealed the wonders of His wisdom in a manner unfathomable to our mind.

69. **THE RABBI:** Thou hast forestalled by thy (last) words much of my intended answer. Dost thou ascribe the wisdom apparent in the creation of an ant, for example, to a sphere or star or to any other object, to the exclusion of the Almighty creator, who weighs and gives everything its due, giving neither too much, nor too little?

70. **THE KHAZARI:** That is ascribed to the action of Nature.

71. **THE RABBI:** And what is Nature?

72. **THE KHAZARI:** It is a certain power, as we have learnt through the sciences. What it really is, we do not know; but no doubt scholars know.

73. **THE RABBI:** They know as much as we do. Aristotle defined it as the beginning and primary cause through which a thing either moves or rests, not by accident, but by virtue of its inherent essence.

74. **THE KHAZARI:** This would mean that the thing which moves or rests on its own account, implies a cause by which it moves or rests, and this cause is Nature.

75. **THE RABBI:** This is his meaning; yet he adds many subtleties and discriminations between accidental and natural occurrences and he makes statements astonishing to those who hear them; but the essence of their doctrine of Nature is just this.

76. **THE KHAZARI:** Then we are misled by these names, and we are persuaded to add an associate to God, if we say that Nature is wise and active, that perhaps Nature even creates, if we concluded rightly from them.

77. THE RABBI: Certainly. It is true, that the elements, moon, sun and stars have effect, such as warming, cooling, moistening, drying, etc.; yet we should ascribe to them not wisdom but mere functioning labour. Shaping (of the animal being), determining of its size and conception of it, however, and everything that betrays intention, can only be ascribed to Him, who is wise, victorious and who is possessed of the power to decree things. There is no harm in denoting the force which affects matter through heating and cooling as 'Nature'; but all intelligence must be denied it. Thus we deny human beings the faculty of creating the embryo by their intercourse, because they only assist matter to receive human form from the wise Creator. Do not therefore deem it improbable for exalted traces of the Divine to be rendered visible in the low world, when the (low) matter is prepared to receive them. Herein is to be found the root of belief and unbelief.

78. THE KHAZARI: How may the root of belief be also the root of unbelief?

79. THE RABBI: The things which are capable of receiving Divine influence are not under man's control. It is impossible for him to gauge their quantity or quality; and even if their essence were known, yet neither their time, place, constitution, nor preparation are revealed. For this an instruction is required, inspired by God, detailed through sublime evidence. He who has been thus inspired, and who obeys the order with all its determinations and conditions with a pure mind, is the true believer. But an unbeliever is he who strives by speculation and deduction to influence conditions for the reception of this (Divine) power, as revealed in the writings of astrologers, who try to call down supernatural beings, or who manufacture talismans. He brings offerings and burns incense in accordance with his own analogic deductions and conjectures, being in reality ignorant of that which we should do, how much, in which way, by what means, in which place, by whom, in which manner, and many other details, the enumeration of which would lead us too far. He is like an ignorant man who enters

the surgery of a physician famous for the curative power of his medicines. The physician is not at home, but people come for medicines. The ignorant man dispenses them out of the jars, knowing nothing of the contents, nor how much should be given to each person. Thus he kills with the very medicine which should have cured them. Should he by chance have effected a cure with one of the drugs, the people will turn to him and say that it helped them—till they discover that he deceived them; or they note the accidental success of another drug and turn to it. They do not notice that the real cure was effected by the skill of the learned physician who prepared the medicines and explained the proper manner in which they were to be administered, and also taught the patients what food and drink, exercise and rest, sleep, ventilation and kind of bed, etc., was necessary. Men before the time of Moses, with few exceptions, were like these patients. They were deceived by astrological and physical doctrines; they turned from doctrine to doctrine, from god to god, or adopted a plurality (of doctrines and gods) at the same time; they forgot the guide and master of those powers and regarded the latter as helpful factors, whereas they are in reality mostly harmful factors, by reason of their construction and arrangement. Profitable on its own account is the Divine influence, and harmful on its own account, the absence thereof.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR RELIGION

80. **THE KHAZARI:** Let us return to our subject. Explain to me how thy belief grew, how it spread and became celebrated, how differing opinions became united, and how long it took to lay the foundations of the faith and to build up a strong complete structure. For all religions start, no doubt, from single individuals who support one another in upholding the faith which it pleased God should be promulgated. Their number increases continually, they grow more powerful, either by their own virtue, or through the assistance of a king who compels the multitudes to adopt that particular creed.

81. THE RABBI: It is only rational religion of human origin that spreads in this way. When (such a religion) becomes celebrated and succeeds, it is said to be sustained by God, etc. But the religion of Divine origin arises suddenly. It is bidden to arise, and it is there, similar to the creation of the world.

82. THE KHAZARI: Thou startlest me, O Rabbi!

83. THE RABBI: But the facts are yet more startling. The Israelites lived in Egypt as slaves, 600,000 men above the age of twenty, the descendants of the Twelve Tribes. Not one of them had separated or emigrated into another country, nor was there a stranger among them. They looked forward to the promise given to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that the land of Palestine should be their inheritance. At that time it was in the power of seven mighty and prosperous nations, whilst the Israelites groaned in the depths of misery under the bondage of Pharaoh, who caused their children to be put to death, lest they should increase in number. But (God) sent Moses and Aaron, two weak men, and they advanced before the mighty Pharaoh with signs, miracles and change of the course of nature. And Pharaoh could not get away from them, nor harm them, neither could he protect himself from the ten plagues which befell the Egyptians, affecting their streams, land, air, plants, animals, bodies, even their souls; for in one moment, at midnight, died the most precious and most beloved members of their houses, viz. every firstborn male; there was no dwelling without dead, except the houses of the Israelites. All these plagues were preceded by warnings and menaces, and their cessation was signalled in the same way, proving that they were ordained by God, who does what He wills and when He wills, and that they were not ordinary natural phenomena, nor were they wrought by constellations or accident. The Israelites left the country of Pharaoh's bondage, by the command of God, the same night and at the same moment as the firstborn died, and travelled in the direction of the Red Sea, guided by pillars of cloud and fire; their leaders and governors and religious chiefs were Moses and

Aaron, inspired, venerated old men, more than eighty years of age at that time. Up till then the Israelites had had only a few laws, handed down from their chosen ancestors back to Adam and Noah; Moses did not abrogate these laws, but rather added to them. When Pharaoh pursued the Israelites they did not have recourse to arms, being unskilled in their use, but (God) divided the sea and they traversed it; Pharaoh and his host were drowned, and the waves washed their corpses towards the Israelites, so that they could see them with their own eyes. It is a long and well-known story.

84. **THE KHAZARI:** Here the Divine power is manifest, and the commandment connected with (these facts) must be accepted. No one could imagine for a moment that this was the product of witchcraft, trickery, or imagination. For had it been possible to stimulate belief in any imaginary dividing of the waters and the crossing of them, it would also have been possible to gain credence for a similar trickery as regards their delivery from bondage, the death of their tormenters, and the capture of their goods and chattels. And this would be an atheistic distortion.

85. **THE RABBI:** And later on, when they came to the sterile desert, He sent them food, which, except on the Sabbath, was produced daily for them and they ate it for forty years.

86. **THE KHAZARI:** This is also irrefutable, viz. a thing which occurred to six hundred thousand people for forty years. Six days in the week the manna came down, but on the Sabbath it stopped. This makes the observance of the Sabbath obligatory, since Divine power is connected with it.

87. **THE RABBI:** The Sabbath is confirmed by this fact as well as by the creation of the world in six days and also by another matter to which I shall now refer. Although the people believed in the message of Moses after the performance of these miracles, they retained some doubt as to whether God really communed with mortals, and whether or not the Law was of human origin, only later supported by Divine inspiration. They could not associate speech with a Divine being,

since speech is a corporeal function. God, however, desired to remove this doubt. He commanded them to prepare themselves morally as well as physically, enjoining them to keep aloof from their wives and to be ready to hear the words of God. The people prepared and fitted themselves to receive prophetic inspiration and even actually to hear (in person) the words of God. This came to pass three days later, and was preceded by overwhelming phenomena, lightning, thunder, earthquake and fire, which surrounded Mount Sinai. The fire remained visible to the people forty days; they also saw Moses enter it and emerge from it; they distinctly heard the Ten Commandments, the source and foundation of the Law. One of these is the ordination of the Sabbath. . . . He wrote these Ten Words on two tablets of precious stone, and handed them to Moses.

88. **THE KHAZARI:** If any one were to hear you relate that God spoke to your assembled multitude, and wrote tablets for you, etc., he could not be blamed for accusing you of believing in the corporeality of God. But you also are free from blame, because these grand and lofty spectacles, seen by thousands, cannot be denied; therefore, you are justified in rejecting analogical conclusions and speculation.

89. **THE RABBI:** Heaven forbid that we should assume what is impossible or that which reason rejects as being impossible. The first of the Ten Commandments enjoins the belief in Divine providence; and immediately there follows the second command which forbids the worship of other gods, the association of any human beings with Him, His representation in statues, forms, and images, in general, i.e. the belief in His corporeality. We must not, however, reject the tradition concerning that apparition. We say, then, that we do not know how the idea took bodily form, nor how the speech was evolved which struck our ear, nor what new thing God created from naught, nor what existing thing he employed; for nothing is beyond His power. Just so we have to admit that He created the two tablets, and engraved a text on them, in the same way as He created the heaven and the stars by His will alone.

90. THE KHAZARI: This representation is satisfactory.

91. THE RABBI: I do not maintain that this is exactly how these things occurred. Maybe they happened in another way, which is too deep for me to fathom. But the result was that every one who viewed those apparitions became convinced that the matter proceeded from God direct. Thus, the belief in the law connected with those scenes was firmly established in the mind.

92. THE KHAZARI: Take care, O Rabbi, lest too great indulgence for thy people induce thee to overestimate and to overlook what is known of their disobedience despite the revelation. I know that at that time they made a calf and worshipped it instead of God.

93. THE RABBI: A sin which was reckoned all the heavier on account of their greatness. Great is he whose sins are counted.

94. THE KHAZARI: Here is shown again thy obstinacy and thy partiality for thy people. What sin could be greater than this? And must not all right of precedence yield to this?

95. THE RABBI: Bear with me a little and I will prove the pre-eminence of the people. For me it is sufficient that God chose them as His community and people from all the nations of the world; that the Divine power descended on the whole people, so that they all became worthy to be addressed by Him. The power even swayed their women, among whom were prophetesses. Up to that time the power had descended from Adam on isolated individuals only. For Adam was perfection itself, because no flaw could be found in the work of a wise and almighty Creator, wrought from a substance chosen by Him, and fashioned according to His own design—and there was no contaminating influence from the sperm of the father and the blood of the mother, from nourishing and nursing in the years of childhood and growth, from air, water and soil. For He created him in the form of an adolescent, perfect in body and mind. He was endowed, therefore, with the most perfect soul and with the loftiest intellect which it is possible

for a human being to possess, and, surpassing intellect, with the Divine faculty, viz. an eminence enabling him to enter into communication with God and spiritual beings and to comprehend the great truths without instruction after slight reflection. We call him God's son, and we call those of his descendants who are like him, sons of God. He begot many children; but the only one capable of taking his place was Abel, because he alone was like him. After he had been slain by Cain through jealousy of this peculiar eminence, he was replaced by Seth, who also was like Adam; he was the pick of Adam's progeny and his 'heart', while the others were 'husks' and rotten fruit. The pick of Seth's progeny was Enoch, and in this way was the Divine power connected with isolated individuals down to Noah; they were the 'heart', they resembled Adam, and were styled sons of God. They were perfect outwardly and inwardly, as regards length of life, knowledge and power; their lives fix the chronology from Adam to Noah, as well as from Noah to Abraham. There were some, however, among them who had no communication with the Divine power, such as Terah; but his son Abraham was the disciple of his grandfather Eber, and for this reason he was called 'Hebrew'; Eber was the pick of Shem's progeny, Shem the pick of Noah's; accordingly he inherited the temperate zone, the centre and jewel of which is Palestine, the land of prophecy, whilst Japhet turned toward the north, and Ham towards the south. The pick of Abraham's sons was Isaac. Abraham, therefore, removed all his children from the privileged land, in order to give it over to Isaac alone. The pick of Isaac's sons was Jacob; his brother Esau was removed, because the land belonged to Jacob. The sons of Jacob were all 'picked' and worthy of the (influence of the) Divine power; they all, therefore, received the country, distinguished through the Divine power. This is the first instance of the Divine power descending on a number of people, whereas it was previously found in single individuals only. Then God tended them in Egypt, multiplied and fostered them, as we foster a tree with a sound root until it produces perfect fruit, resembling the

first fruit from which it was planted, viz. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brethren. And the fruit ripened in Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Bezaleel, Oholiah and the chiefs of the tribes, the seventy Elders, who were all endowed with the spirit of continual prophecy; then Joshua, Caleb, Hur, and many others. Then (the Israelites) became worthy of the Divine light and (special) Divine providence. If disobedient men existed among them, they were hated, but remained, without doubt, within the picked; they were part of the picked on account of their descent and nature, and begot children who belonged to the picked. A disobedient man, therefore, received (Divine) consideration by reason of the admixture of picked blood, which appeared in his children and grandchildren, according to the purity of their lineage—as we decided that Terah and others with whom the Divine power was not connected were enabled to beget descendants belonging to the picked, according to their natural disposition, which was not the case with all the posterity of Ham and Japhet. We perceive a similar phenomenon in nature: many people do not resemble their father at all, but resemble their grandfathers; there cannot, consequently, be any doubt that this nature and resemblance was latent in the father, although it did not become visible outwardly, like the nature of Eber in his children, until it reappeared in Abraham.

96. **THE KHAZARI:** This is the true nobility, which descended directly from Adam, the noblest creature on earth; yours by right, therefore, is the title of nobility among all the inhabitants of the earth. But how to reconcile this nobility with that sin?

97. **THE RABBI:** All nations were given to idolatry at that time. Even the philosophers, who proclaimed the unity and the government of God, were unable to dispense with an image, and taught the masses that the Divine power was connected with the image, which was distinguished by some miraculous power; no people, therefore, were reconciled to any law without a visible image on which they could depend. The Israelites had been promised that something visible would

descend on them from God on which they could depend, as they followed the pillars of cloud and fire when they departed from Egypt; this they pointed out and fell to praising it, and worshipping God in its presence. Thus they also turned towards the cloud which hovered over Moses, while God spoke with him; they rose and worshipped God in its presence. Now the people had heard the proclamation of the Ten Commandments, and Moses had ascended the mount in order to receive the tables which he was to bring down to them inscribed, and then to make an ark towards which they should direct their gaze during their devotions. In this was the Divine covenant and God's latest creation, the tablets. To it belonged the cloud, the (Divine) Light, and all miracles wrought through its instrumentality. The people waited for (Moses') return, clad in the same apparel in which they had witnessed the drama on Sinai, without removing their jewels or changing their clothes, remaining just as he left them, expecting every moment to see him return. He, however, tarried forty days, although he had not provided himself with food, having only left them with the intention of returning the same day. Then distrust overpowered a section of this great people, and they began to divide into parties and factions. Many views and opinions were expressed, till at last some of them had recourse to demanding an object of worship, towards which they could turn, like the other nations, without, however, prejudicing the supremacy of Him who had brought them out of Egypt; they wished only to have something towards which they could direct their gaze when relating the wonders of God, as the believers did with the ark, exclaiming 'there is the Lord', as we do with the sky and every other object which we know to be set in motion by the Divine will exclusively, and not by any accident or desire of man or nature. Their sin consisted in the manufacture of an image, which was forbidden to them, and in attributing Divine power to a thing made and chosen by themselves without the order of God. Some excuse may be found for them in the above mentioned dissension; actually out of six hundred thousand souls the number of those who

worshipped the calf was below three thousand. For those of higher station who assisted in making it, an excuse might be found in the fact that they wished to separate clearly the disobedient from the pious, in order to slay those who would worship the calf. On the other hand, they sinned in causing what was only a sin of intention to be a sin in deed. This sin was not on a par with an entire lapse from obedience to Him who had led them out of Egypt, as only one of His commands was violated by them: God had forbidden images, and in spite of this they made one. They should have waited and not have created for themselves an object of worship, arranging an altar and sacrifices. This had been done by the advice of the astrologers and magicians among them, who imagined that their actions based on analogical conclusions could approach the true ones. They resembled the fool of whom we spoke, who entered the surgery of a physician and dealt out death to those who had formerly profited from the remedies. The whole affair appears to us so repulsive, because nowadays the majority of nations have abandoned the worship of images; it was less objectionable at that time, because all nations were then idolators. Had their sin consisted in constructing a house of worship of their own, and creating a place of prayer, offering and veneration, the matter would not have appeared so grave; because nowadays we also build our houses of worship, hold them in great respect, and seek blessing through their means. If this were not essential for the cohesion of our community, it would be as unknown as it was in the time of the kings, when the people were forbidden to erect places of worship, called heights; the pious kings destroyed them, lest (any place of worship) be venerated beside the house chosen by God, in which He was to be worshipped according to His own ordinances.

98. THE KHAZARI: Thou confirmest the opinion I formed through meditation and through what I saw in my vision: that man can only attain to Divine 'order' through Divine 'ordinance', viz. through actions ordained by God.

COMMENTARY TO BOOK I

§ 1. Jehuda Halevi is in line with historical tradition. True comprehension of the Kuzari is concerned not with historical facts, but with the question: What did J. H. find set down and how did he bend tradition to accord with his aims?

The tradition is as follows: Bulan, King of the Khazars (who inhabited the area known today as Southern Russia), was a God-fearing man who distinguished himself by fighting against what remained of heathendom. To him appeared an angel in his dream, who said unto him: 'Bulan, I am sent by the Everlasting God to give thee this message: "I (God) have heard thy prayer; I bless thee and will cause thee to be exceedingly fruitful; thy kingdom shall stand for a thousand generations and I shall deliver thine enemies into thy hands.'" The following morning the king arose, thanked the Lord and excelled still more in pious actions. Then the angel appeared a second time and said to him: 'My son, I have seen thy ways, and thy deeds please me; I know that thou followest me with all thy soul and all thy might; I will give thee justice and law if thou wilt observe my commandments and keep my laws'. Then the king answered the angel: 'Oh my Lord, Thou knowest my heart's thoughts; Thou hast searched my inmost parts and knowest that my whole trust is in Thee. But the people over whom I reign are unbelieving; I do not know if they will believe me; if Thou hast pity upon me, Thou wilt also appear to their great vizier so that he may help me.' God granted his wish and appeared to the vizier in his dream; the latter informed the King early on the following morning. Now the King sent for his ministers, his servants and all his people and set the matter before them; they were converted to the (true) faith and took refuge under the wings of the Shekinah. In another dream, God demanded the erection of a temple. But then 'the King of Edom and the King of Ishmael' heard about the King and sent their ambassadors laden with costly presents in order to convert the King to their faiths. The King, who was a clever man, sent for a Jewish scholar; the three men held discussions and could not come to an agreement. The King then secretly asked first the Christian, and afterwards the Moslem, which was the better of the two remaining faiths. Both chose Judaism as being founded on truth and because God had performed miracles for the Jews until their sins

had brought down His anger upon them. Thereupon the King declared, in a public assembly, that he accepted Judaism; he had himself and his people circumcised and they had learned Jews to instruct them in the particulars of their faith.

J. H. could not make more use of these facts than Goethe did of the descriptions of the life of the alchemist Doctor Faustus. There was the dream—the discussions (in which Christians and Moslems admit the wonders of Jewish history)—the conversion: that is all. On the other hand: the inward process of conversion as known to this tradition was useless to J. H. According to this description, the King was against heathendom from the beginning, hesitating only as to which of the three monotheistic religions to adopt; it is a dream that makes him decide in favour of Judaism. The discussions are not instigated by the King: he only listens to the Christian and the Moslem in order not to offend powerful neighbours. He has no difficulty in accepting Judaism seeing that the two younger faiths are at one in recognizing it (and because there were many respected Jews in his kingdom). In J. H.'s version, on the other hand, the King only learns from the dream that there exists a course of action which is pleasing to God, i.e. an absolute religion; it is only after listening to the representatives of all religions that he attains to the belief that the least popular religion is the true one; thereby he succeeds not only in arousing the human sympathy of the reader but also in shifting the general centre of the interest of the whole story: everything now depends on the content and argument of the expositions given by the representatives of the three religions.

Although the presentation of the non-Jewish views is strictly objective, it is, nevertheless, part of the general plan. It is intended to supply an *indirect proof* of the truth of Jewish teaching. Each of the three opposing conceptions contains both points of agreement and of disagreement with Judaism. J. H. attempts to prove that the points of agreement are evident and that the points of disagreement are controversial.

The question that the King sets before the four debaters is briefly this: which are the ways known to you of approach to God, by which we may attain nearness to God in this world and immortality in the world to come?

§ 2. He first questions a philosopher—not about his conception of life (this is critically reviewed in the 5th Book of the Kuzari),

but as to whether there is contact with God through the medium of philosophy. The answer is yes and no. No, in so far as God Himself, the Unalterable, the Highest Cause, has no direct contact with the world under the moon—the realm of growth and decay. Yes, in so far as we are influenced by the mediums emanating from God. In the contemplation of this 'world of spirits' (a notion derived from neo-Platonism) we are reminded of the first scene of *Faust*. In particular, the 'Erdgeist' bears a resemblance to the 'active intellect' here mentioned, which is also instrumental in regulating the fluctuations of earthly happenings by giving form to matter. But 'active intellect' has the additional task of passing knowledge of these forms on to man. Hence human intellect is described as 'passive', i.e. 'receptive' in relation to 'active intellect'. But this receptive power is only exerted when man is redeemed from his lower instincts (thus philosophic religion also insists on moral purity) and is able to concentrate on thought. The more he succeeds in doing this, the nearer he approaches to the 'active intellect' until he finally becomes one with it. Through this unification we secure a share in the immortality of the 'active intellect'. Hence devotion to philosophic perception is not merely a scholar's ideal: it is also a means to the attainment of truth, of morality and of immortality. There is no need of any additional dogma or ritual.

The King's verdict on the philosopher's discourse must not be regarded as that of J. H. The praise with which the King begins only applies, according to J. H., to the theory of heritage and environment (see our Introduction) and not to the actual philosophical doctrines (Book I, § 13), amongst which the strange theory of emanation is in particular rejected (Book IV, § 25) as being completely unfounded. The King, however, is only concerned with the *religious* content of the discourse. That which appeals to him is best illustrated by the remark he makes later on (Book I, § 8) that reason is opposed to the conception of God being in relation with 'this world' (in Arabic a rather derogatory term is used for this notion) and with humanity. But he cannot lightly make up his mind to declare that the belief of the Churches in absolute religion and in the creation is an illusion; and he cannot see at all why philosophy has failed to produce prophets when its own premises lead us to accept their presence. He therefore turns to the prophetic religions with the object of learning their content and, more especially, the foundation of their doctrines.

§ 4, middle. In the discourses of the Christian and Moslem, the sympathetic and antipathetic is present in inverse proportion to that of the philosopher's discourse. They justify the struggle for supremacy among the religions; in addition, their teaching is of a personal God taking part in our affairs; but they do not satisfy reason; for that which cannot be explained by analogies can only be made plausible by reference to miracles which are unquestionable because they were performed in public. The Moslem refers to such miracles only in connection with the Old Testament foundation of his religion, a foundation he shares with the Christian. Of course, the particular characteristics of Christianity and Islam cannot be established on the basis of these miracles. The King therefore desires to learn about Judaism, which prescribes faith only in such doctrines as are proved by those miracles. 'Empiricism', i.e. the desire to understand historical fact, had prompted him to refrain, at first, from questioning the Jew (§ 4, middle), whose precarious position was apparent evidence against the truth of his religion. But the arguments of the representatives of the other religions (including the philosopher's faith) induce him to hope that he may here find the true religion producing satisfactory evidence of that which is 'beyond reason'.

Though both discourses betray the weak points of the more recent religions, they nevertheless seek to give psychological justification for their propagation. This is found in § 2 (both religions are propagated by means of the sword) and particularly in the remark in the middle of § 5 that one is easily induced to remain true to a faith in which one has been reared. He who favours a simple faith like J. H. (Book V, § 1) is bound to consider such argument very comprehensible. But, of course, it does not prove anything as regards the truth-content of the religions.

§§ 12-17. Note the dramatic trend of the dialogue. The obviously inadequate definition of the Jew not only stimulates logical doubts, but further strengthens the King in his contempt for Judaism. In § 12 he still speaks very condescendingly. The Rabbi answers most politely that the King's criticism rests on an under-estimation of our mode of thought, i.e. generally speaking, we Jews are despised just because what actually constitutes the best part of our teaching is not understood.

§ 15 means: the definition of God is the proof. I believe in God who has led us out of Egypt—*because* He has led us out of Egypt.

§ 17 ff. J. H. is not to be interpreted as rejecting evidence of God through Nature and, in particular, through the structure of organisms. But he does not hold this evidence to be as convincing as the evidence of revelation and miracles. Therefore (§ 24) God is primarily to be denoted as the God of revelation and only in the second place as God of the creation.

§ 26 ff. A second surprise! At first the King had cast doubts on the foundations of Judaism—wrongly as he realizes. Now he attempts to refute Judaism by saying that because of its purely historical foundation, it appeals only to Jews and is therefore a separatist religion. The Rabbi attempts to show that the full truth could be revealed only to the chosen few. Hence separatism is an *advantage* of Judaism.

§ 27. J. H.'s doctrine of Israel being the 'pick' of mankind (see note to § 95) should not be understood as an extension of the Biblical doctrine of the election of Israel (the Hebrew translation סְגִלָּה is deceptive). Nowhere does J. H. quote the Biblical passages which deal with the election such as Ex. xix, 5, though the opportunity frequently presents itself, e.g. Book I, § 109. The expression 'pick' rather denotes the religious choice of mankind. In Book I, § 95, the synonym 'heart' is used for a group in contrast to 'shell'. Bahya in his 'Duties of the Heart' often uses the same term with reference to particularly pious men of all nations. But J. H.'s conception is more distinctly racial; this is shown by the line he draws between the white and black races in the immediately preceding context (§ 27), which corresponds exactly to the conception of the philosopher (§ 1). He is of opinion that the gift for religion (unaffected by recessive phenomena) is bestowed on one particular group of mankind (see Introduction); in particular it cannot—as the Christian teaches (§ 4)—be transferred by the adoption of a faith (by 'a word': Book IV, § 23).

§ 31 ff. The following remarks of J. H. are fundamental for his conception of nature and religion. In all Nature's 'realms' he sees the working of powers striving towards a definite goal. He denotes these powers by a term that is a literal translation of the comprehensive Greek notion 'Logos', which cannot be absolutely reproduced in any language. In our translation 'force', the characteristic striving towards a goal is insufficiently expressed. The highest of these forces, the 'Divine', is the medium of the highest prophetic

grace; as such it is very frequently referred to in the following; the lower forces are sometimes termed 'Divine' only in the broader sense as all issuing from God.

§ 63. J. H.'s instinctive attitude towards the philosophy of Aristotle, and Greek culture in general, is a distinct departure from the rule of nearly all Jewish philosophers. Maimonides, for instance, and the readers for whom he writes, are definitely constrained by the contradictions between Jewish tradition and Aristotle's doctrine, and consider it their duty to give an exact justification of the points of dissension. Jehuda Halevi, however, is not at all disconcerted by such contradictions; how can the Greeks be expected to be in full possession of the truth! His critical attitude, however, is not based on the conviction (natural to us) that no philosophy can be based on authority, but rather on the medieval notion that philosophy, like every other science, is partly based on the fruit of individual intellect and partly on tradition. The opinion that the Greeks inherited their knowledge from the Orientals was common to Jew and Christian alike; it was even borne out—with certain limitations—by individual Greeks themselves; for certain branches of natural science—especially that of astronomy, which was so highly considered in the Middle Ages—it is not lightly to be discarded. It is very characteristic of J. H.'s conception of the 'pick of mankind' that he includes among the chosen in the broader sense the Chaldean astronomers and star worshippers, whom he represents as teachers of the Greeks; he accounts for their superiority by stressing the superiority of their place of residence (as in § 95), i.e. climatically.

§ 67. J. H. does not consider belief in the Creation out of nothing to be fundamental, whereas Saadya bases his whole conception of God on it. What J. H. regards as the essential is God's ministration in this world and especially His power over human fate. Maimonides admits the connection between the belief in creation and the belief in ministration, but does not include the former in his thirteen creeds.

§ 69. The question about the 'creation of the ant' exemplifies the general question: how can we explain the phenomenon of the useful in nature?

The King settles the question in the main by attributing these phenomena to Divine wisdom (§ 68-end). Aristotle, on the other

hand, assigns to Nature a force that strives towards a definite goal—not in the passage to which J. H. refers, i.e. Physics II, § 3, end, but in phrases such as 'God and Nature do nothing in vain' (Of Heavens I, 4-end). Arab philosophers, under pantheistic influence, went a step further. J. H. opposes to this recognition of Nature's supremacy two arguments:

(1) that, however learned the distinction between nature and chance may sound, the description of organic processes as 'natural' scarcely explains the wisdom behind the life of organisms . . .

(2) that the recognition of a creative principle besides God (as expressed in the above quoted passage) means religious Dualism; the Arabic has a strong denunciatory term for this; for Islam also is firm in its assertion of the Unity and Peerlessness of God (Book I, § 5, middle).

§ 77, end-§ 79. J. H. submits the following idea. The theoretic recognition that God is active in this lower sphere induces the wish to give practical stimulus to such demonstrations of Divine power. This is at the root of all religions—the true as well as the false. Whereas the devotee of the true religion knows that the way to God is only *through* God (i.e. through His revelation), the devotees of the false religion rely on reason. At best they make use of revealed remedies such as sacrifices, days of rest or fasts, but contrary to prescription and, therefore, for the most part without effect (the analogy is to the doctor's assistant!). Still worse is the use of amulets (revealed religion knows nothing of these), or the attempt to evoke the power of the stars in place of God's power through faith in their Divinity. In reality this faith runs counter to the common root of the true and false religions stressed at the end of § 77, i.e. the belief that God alone exerts power over the world. But Jehuda Halevi cannot forgo the rejection of astrological piety (see § 97), since it exerted a great influence on all medieval religions; for according to him it is typical of the faith in man's power to approach God through the medium of his own effort.

§§ 80-87. The theme, which is not, of course, accurately formulated by the King, is as follows: Does history establish the pre-eminence of Judaism over other religions which also profess to be based on revelation and miracles?

Affirmation of this question is claimed partly on the assumption that the miracles of Judaism are performed in fuller publicity

(cf. § 8) and cannot therefore be reckoned as deceit or deception. More significant is the stress on the fact (§ 81) that, according to the evidence of its history, Judaism has developed in a completely different way from Christianity, Islam (and Buddhism), where the sphere of influence was extended from a small inner circle. Recent schools of criticism have pointed out that Jewry is the only community that boasts of a revelation of God to *the whole body of the people*; from this premise, they explain the fact that Judaism, notwithstanding the universalism of its conception of God, knows itself to be bound to the heirs of those who received the revelation. Jehuda Halevi might have accepted this conclusion (cf. Book I, § 95); but here he attempts to show that Christianity and Islam originated in the same way as philosophic schools (e.g. the Socratic) and that Judaism, on the other hand, originated suddenly, like the world, being, like the latter, a Divine creation.

§ 85 ff. Here Jehuda Halevi justifies the theory that the Jewish weekly day of rest is the true one because it is distinguished by God Himself. He voices the same thought in Song III (p. 134 f.).

§ 89 beginning. Cf. § 67 beginning. The reproach in § 88 has all the more weight from the fact that, according to the philosophic teaching of the time, belief in the corporeality of God is in contradiction to the belief in His Unity, which is the fundament of Jewish-Islamic teaching (everything corporeal being divisible!). Jehuda Halevi therefore stresses the fact that the doctrine of 'Unity', i.e. of the incompatibility of God to all earthly things, is found in the second commandment.

§ 92 ff. Jehuda Halevi in no way feels himself absolutely called upon to appear as an apologist for his people. Quite in line with tradition, he attributes the bad position of the Jewish people to the sins they have committed—conceived by him, indeed, in a very original manner (see Book II, § 24). If he seeks to extenuate even the sin of the golden calf, it is because this is the very sin which is often stressed by the Fathers of the Church and by Islam, and to which the loss of the preferential position of Judaism is attributed (Book I, § 4). For this same reason, it is often treated apologetically in the Aggadah. But apparently here again Jehuda Halevi strikes out on his own line. In the first place, he stresses the fact that there is a great difference between the worship of idols and the satisfaction in a forbidden way of the justifiable (Book IV, § 5) need for a perceptible symbol of God's presence; there is a similar difference between Jeroboam and

Ahab (Book IV, § 13 ff.). He then proceeds to explain the sin historically. We no longer admit any cult images, but are easily inclined to over-estimate the seriousness of the sin committed in a time when the worship of images was general. Such a historical conception is rare in medieval Judaism (Maimonides makes use of this method in his explanation of some of the commandments): but it is exceptionally well suited to Jehuda Halevi's explanation of religions through heredity and milieu! In this way Jehuda Halevi is able to show that the sin of the golden calf rests on that fundamental error which he is constantly challenging (§ 77, end): the belief that man can find the way to God by the strength of his own reasoning, not needing revelation; in the case of the golden calf this belief is said to have been represented by 'astrologers and soothsayers', i.e. probably by non-Jews (according to the Midrash Lev. R. 27, 8). Jehuda Halevi's treatment of the question has therefore not only the apologetic force that comes out clearly in § 97, end, but also a definite systematic significance; the latter is clearly emphasized in the King's summary (§ 98).

A very remarkable interpretation of history is here introduced (§ 95). It proceeds from primitive man in the same way as the Christian historical conception. But whereas the latter in general lays exclusive emphasis on the sin of Adam, Jehuda Halevi lays an equally exclusive emphasis on the pre-eminence of man created in the likeness of God, calling Adam the son of God with reference to Gen. vi, 2, where, according to a widespread theory, the 'sons of God' who came to the 'daughters of man' are held to be the genuine heirs of Adam's pre-eminence (*cf.* Hosea ii, 1, 'Sons of the living God'). Thus Adam already belongs to the religious supermen mentioned in § 41. Yet his religious competence was not transferred to all his descendants, but was inherited only by one man in each generation like the 'true ring' in Lessing's fable (which is perhaps based on a Jewish model). In particular the inheritor in the line of Abraham is not Ishmael, as Islam naturally asserts, but only Isaac. That is why Ishmael is driven out—that he may not inherit together with Isaac (Gen. xxi, 10), i.e. the land of prophecy, Palestine! This is also why Abraham sent away the sons of Ketura from his son Isaac (Gen. xxv, 6) and why Esau leaves Palestine with God's approval (Josh. xxiv, 4). On the other hand, Jacob's sons, many relapses notwithstanding, were worthy of Palestine; in this sense they constitute the pick of mankind (*cf.* § 27)

commentary). Arguing thus, the present state of Israel and its future hope become clear. Our present remoteness from the Holy Land hinders us from displaying our prophetic gift in its full glory; if once this hindrance is removed, the ancient times will live again; thus the essence of history and the goal of religion is not the redemption from original sin, but the reattainment of original perfection.

§ 98 is the expression in a pun of a fundamental thought of the book: One can only attain to the effect of Divine power, to which reference is often made in §§ 95 and 97, and, accordingly, to the pre-eminence of the 'picked' (§§ 27 and 41) through the commandments. In Arabic the same word stands for 'order' and 'ordinance'.

Let us cast a retrospective glance at the first book, the important passages of which are included almost intact in our selection. It obviously falls into two unequal sections: the opening dialogue brings indirect proof of the truth of Judaism, both through the indication of flaws in the other three religions and through the establishment of the fact that the other Biblical religions are able to bring evidence of unequivocal miracles only from the history of Israel. The second part is a direct justification of the doctrines of Judaism. But this part seems, at first sight, to be lacking in plan. The course of the conversation seems not to be set by the Rabbi, who represents the author, but by the King and on the inspiration of the moment. This accounts for the natural, unforced character of the dialogue; as in Plato's dialogue there is nothing pedantic, which would have offended the artistic nature of the author. And yet these questions and their sequence are actually governed, of course, by the author's plan. This is shown by the fact that he puts the conversion of the King not at the end of the conversation or at least at the end of the theologic discussion, i.e. after Book IV (Book V is almost purely philosophical in character), but at the beginning of Book II. That is to say that Book I is intended to present *a general description of Judaism as a whole*; Books II-IV serve as a completion of the argument and Book V as a defence: In other words, Jehuda Halevi's presentation of Judaism is not purely systematic as is Saadya's or H. Cohen's, but is in *concentric circles*, and risks a certain amount of repetition. He may have been influenced in this by consideration for such readers as are not prepared or not able to read the whole book (the plan of Maimonides' 'More Nebukhim' was affected by a like consideration). But even the argument of the Rabbi in Book I is in concentric form. First the

main thought is presented: religion, in the full sense of the word, can only be traced from the history of revelation to the pick of mankind (§§ 11–43). This thought is elucidated by the clear exposition of the relation to Greek philosophy and to the sister religions. In this way the outcome of the preliminary dialogue (§ 1 ff.) attains a definite profundity. It now appears that philosophy in no way deserves the confidence the layman (§ 2) places in it; on the contrary, its doctrine of the everlastingness of the world rests on a weak foundation, and its conception of nature is a mere bluff (§§ 62–77); indeed, these flaws are not surprising, seeing that the Greeks were not bearers of the true tradition and this could not be made good for all their perspicuity. On the other hand, it appears that Judaism remains fundamentally separated from the sister religions by virtue of the history of its origin (§ 81) and that, as the King had already noted, the common good of the three Biblical religions—the belief in the revelation to Moses and in the Torah (*cf.* § 4, middle–§ 5, middle)—is true and can be defended against the attacks of the philosophers (§ 88 ff.); but that the statement that Israel, possibly through the sin of the golden calf, had forfeited its right of pre-eminence cannot be maintained (§ 92 ff.); in a passage not included here, Jehuda Halevi adds, incidentally, that our sufferings are not evidence against us, seeing that other religions even boast of their sufferings (§ 113).

This presentation is interrupted here and there by digressions such as occur also in Plato; for in ancient and medieval times a text used to include points that we would nowadays add in notes or in 'learned appendices'. But one cannot mistake Jehuda Halevi's intention of creating a foundation on which the elucidation of important notions can be superimposed in the following books.

BOOK II

THE UNITY OF GOD

1. AFTER this the Khazari and his Vizier travelled to the deserted mountains on the seashore, and arrived one night at the cave in which some Jews used to celebrate the Sabbath. They disclosed their identity to them, embraced their religion, were circumcised in the cave and then returned to their country. The king, studying the Torah and the books of the prophets, employed the Rabbi as his teacher, and put many questions to him concerning Hebrew expressions. The first of these questions referred to the names and attributes ascribed to God and their seeming anthropomorphism, which is opposed to reason and to the unmistakable doctrine of the Law.

2. THE RABBI: All the names of God, save the Tetragrammaton, are predicates and relative attributes, derived from the way His creatures are affected by His decrees and measures. He is called merciful, for the improvement in the condition of any man whom people pity for his sorry plight; hence, they attribute to Him mercy and compassion, although these attributes, in us, testify in truth to a weakness of the soul and irritability of nature. This cannot be applied to God. He is a just judge; He ordains the poverty of one individual and the wealth of another; without any change in His nature, without feelings of sympathy with one or anger against another. We see similar impartiality in human judges; they decide the questions put to them according to the law, making some people happy, and others miserable. He (God) appears to us according to His doings, sometimes a 'merciful and compassionate God' (Ex. xxxiv, 6), sometimes 'a jealous and revengeful God' (Nahum i, 2), whereas He never changes from one attribute to the other.

All attributes—except the Tetragrammaton—are divided into three classes, viz. active, relative and negative. The active attributes are derived from acts emanating from Him through natural intermediaries, e.g. 'making poor or rich, exalting or

casting down, merciful and compassionate, jealous and revengeful, strong, almighty (Shaddai)' and the like. Relative attributes are, for example, 'blessed, praised, glorified, holy, exalted, and extolled'; they are taken from the reverence paid to Him by mankind; however numerous these may be, they produce no plurality in God, and do not affect his unity. Negative attributes are, for example, 'living, only, first and last'. They are given to Him in order to negate their contrasts, but not to establish them in the sense familiar to us. For we cannot understand life unaccompanied by sensibility and movement; God, however, is above these; we describe Him as living in order to negate the attributes of rigidity (minerals) and deadness (bodies), in accordance with the prejudice that all which does not live is dead—a prejudice rejected by reason. One cannot, for example, speak of time as being endowed with life; yet it does not follow that time is dead, since its nature has nothing to do with either life or death. Life and death are, therefore, only applicable to material bodies, whereas the Divine essence is transcendent. On the other hand: if one says 'life, but not like ours', it coincides with our opinion. In the same way we take the term 'One', viz. to controvert plurality, not to establish unity as we understand it; for we call a thing 'one', when the component parts are coherent and of the same materials, e.g. one bone, one sinew, one water, one air; in a similar way we speak of time, in comparison with a compact body (saying) 'one day, one year'; the Divine essence is not subject to complexity or divisibility, and 'one' only stands as the negation of plurality. In the same way (we style Him) 'First' in order to exclude the notion of later origin, but not to assert that He has a beginning; thus also 'Last' stands to negate the idea of finality, but not to fix a term for Him. None of these attributes touch on the Divine essence, nor do they imply multiplicity in connection with it.

The attributes connected with the Tetragrammaton describe creations of God, produced without any natural intermediaries, as e.g. Creator, Producer, Maker, 'who *alone* doeth great wonders' (Ps. cxxxvi, 4), i.e. by His bare intention and will, to the exclusion of any assisting cause. This is perhaps meant in the

passage (Ex. vi, 3) 'I appeared to Abraham . . . as El Shaddai (בָּאֵל שָׁדַי)' viz. in the way of power and victory, as is said 'He suffered no man to do them wrong, and He reproved kings for their sake' (Ps. cv, 14); but He performed no miracles for them as He did for Moses, saying (Ex. l.c.) 'but by my name (וּשְׁמִי) YHVH was I not known to them', meaning (instead of וּשְׁמִי), since the ב in בָּאֵל שָׁדַי refers to the following (also). But for Moses and the Israelites he performed wonders, which left no manner of doubt in their souls that the Creator of the world created them according to His purpose, as the plagues of Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, the Manna, the pillar of cloud and the like. The reason of this difference was not because they were higher than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but because they were a multitude, and had nourished doubt in their souls, whereas the Patriarchs had the utmost faith and innocence of mind, so that their faith in God would not have suffered, had they been pursued by misfortune all their lives. Therefore, they wanted no signs.

We also call (God) 'wise of heart' (Job ix, 4), because He is the essence of intelligence and intelligence itself; but (intelligence) is no attribute. As to 'almighty' (l.c.), it belongs to the active attributes.

3. THE KHAZARI: But how do you explain those attributes which are of a yet more corporeal nature, viz. seeing, hearing, speaking, writing the tablets, descending on Mount Sinai, rejoicing in His works, grieving in His heart?

4. THE RABBI: Did I not compare Him with a just judge in whose qualities no change exists? If by His decrees people attain prosperity and good fortune, they say that He loves them and takes pleasure in them; if He decrees against others destruction of their houses or extirpation, they say on the contrary that He is filled with hate and wrath. Because nothing that is done or spoken escapes Him, He is called seeing and hearing; because the air and all bodies are under the order of His will and assume shape by His command, as did heaven and earth, He is described as 'speaking and writing'. Likewise from the fine and spiritual

substance, which is called 'holy spirit', arose the spiritual forms called 'glory of God' (*כבוד ה*); metaphorically, it is called YHVH, who 'descended' (Ex. xix, 20) on Mount Sinai.

7. **THE KHAZARI:** The secret of the attributes is now clear, and I understand the meaning of 'The glory of God, Angels of God and Shekinah'. These names are supplied to visionary objects seen by the prophets, for example 'Pillar of Cloud, Consuming Fire, Cloud, Mist, Fire, Splendour'. In a similar way we say of light in the morning, in the evening, and on cloudy days that the rays of light go forth from the sun, although the latter is not visible, and we say that the rays of light belong to the sun itself, although in reality this is not so: it is the terrestrial bodies which, being opposite to it, are affected by it, and reflect its light.

8. **THE RABBI:** Also the glory (*כבוד*) of God is only a ray of Divine light, which has a salutary effect on His people and on His country.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE COUNTRY

9. **THE KHAZARI:** What thou meanest by 'His people' is now intelligible to me, but thy word 'His country' is difficult for me to appreciate.

10. **THE RABBI:** But no difficulty is attached to (the assumption) that one country may have higher qualities than others. Obviously there are places in which particular plants, metals, or animals thrive well, or where the inhabitants are distinguished by their form and character—through the mingling of humours resulting in the perfection or imperfection of the soul.

11. **THE KHAZARI:** Yet I have not heard that the inhabitants of Palestine are better than other people.

12. **THE RABBI:** It is the same case as with your hill on which you say the vines thrive so well. If they had not planted vine branches on it and cultivated them well, it would never have

produced grapes. So precedence belongs to those particular people who, as stated before, represent the 'pick' and the 'heart' (of mankind); the land has also its part in this and so have the religious acts connected with it, which I would compare to the cultivation of the vineyard. But no other place could share with this pre-eminent people the influence of the Divine power, whereas other hills are also able to produce good wine.

13. THE KHAZARI: How can this be? Were there not prophets in other places, between Adam and Moses, as Abraham in Ur-Kasdim, and Ezekiel and Daniel in Babylon, and Jeremiah in Egypt?

14. THE RABBI: Whosoever prophesied, did so either in Palestine or for its sake, viz. Abraham to reach it, Ezekiel and Daniel on account of it, to prepare the return. The two latter, moreover, lived during the time of the first temple and under the influence of the apparition of the Shekinah, through which any member of the 'picked' people who was duly prepared became able to prophesy. But Adam had there his native place, and died there, according to tradition: 'in the cave of Makpelah were buried the four pairs: Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebeccah, Jacob and Leah' (Gen. Rabba lviii, 4). This is the land which bore the name 'before the Lord' and of which it is said 'the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it' (Deut. xi, 12). It was also the first object of jealousy and envy between Cain and Abel: they desired to know which of them would be Adam's successor, his 'picked one' and his 'heart' to inherit the Land, and to stand in communion with the Divine power, whilst the other would be merely the 'shell'. Then Abel was killed by Cain, and the realm was without an heir. Cain 'went out of the presence of the Lord' (Gen. iv, 16), which means that he left the land; (for) he says: 'Thou hast driven me out this day from the land, and from thy face shall I be hid (iv, 14); in the same way it is said: 'Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord' (Jonah i, 3); he only fled, indeed, from the place of prophecy; God, however, brought him back there out of

the belly of the fish and there He appointed him prophet. When Seth was born, who was like Adam—for ‘be begat in his own likeness, after his image’ (Gen. v, 3)—he took Abel’s place; for Adam says ‘God has appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew’ (iv, 25). He merited to be called ‘son of God’, like Adam, and to live in that land, which is the next step to paradise. The land was then the object of jealousy between Isaac and Ishmael, till the latter was rejected as the ‘shell’; the words ‘I have blessed him and I will multiply him exceedingly’ (Gen. xvii, 20) refer to worldly prosperity; but the following words ‘my covenant will I establish with Isaac’ refer to the emanation of the Divine power and happiness in the world to come; with Ishmael and Esau there was no covenant, in spite of their prosperity. About this land there arose also the jealousy between Jacob and Esau for the birthright and the blessing, till Esau was rejected, despite his strength, in favour of Jacob, despite his weakness. Jeremiah’s prophecy in Egypt was inspired by Palestine and was made for its sake. This was also the case with Moses, Aaron and Miriam. Sinai and Paran are reckoned as belonging to Palestine as they are on this side of the Red Sea, as it is said: ‘I will set your bounds from the Red Sea, even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the River’ (Ex. xxiii, 31). There were the altars of the Patriarchs, who were answered by fire from heaven and the Divine light. The ‘binding’ of Isaac took place on a desolate mountain, viz. Moriah; in the days of David, when it was inhabited, the secret was revealed that it was the place specially fit and suitable for the Shekinah; Arauna the Jebusite tilled it at that time. Thus it is said: ‘And Abraham called the name of the place the Lord sees—about which will one day be said: ‘In the mount the Lord shall be seen’ (Gen. xxii, 14). In the book of Chronicles (2, iii, 1) it is stated clearly that the Temple was built on Mount Moriah. There (in Palestine) are, without doubt, the places worthy of being called the gates of heaven. Dost thou not see that Jacob ascribed the vision which he saw, not to the purity of his soul, nor to his belief, nor to his

integrity, but to the place, as it is said: 'He was afraid and said: How awful is this place' (Gen. xxviii, 17): prior to this it is said: 'He lighted upon the place' (xxviii, 11), viz. the distinguished place. Abraham, the 'heart' of the 'picked' people, when he came to maturity and was ready to accept the influence of the Divine power—was he not removed from his country to a place where his perfection could mature, as the agriculturist who finds the root of a good tree in a desert place transplants it into properly tilled ground, in order that the wild root may be transformed into a cultivated one, producing much in the place of little? Having been found in an accidental moment at an accidental place, it produces a luxuriant crop. It was the same with the gift of prophecy among Abraham's descendants in Palestine: it was an asset of many as long as they remained in the land and observed the necessary conditions, viz. purity, worship, and sacrifices, and, above all, the influence of the Shekinah. For the Divine power, one might say, is attendant on the man who appears worthy of the favour, waiting to be attached to him and to be his God, as in the case of the prophets and the pious man; thus Reason is attendant on those whose natural gifts are perfect and whose soul and character are so harmonious that it can find its perfect dwelling among them, viz. philosophers; thus, likewise, the Soul is attendant on a being whose natural powers are perfected to such a degree that a higher power is able to dwell within it, viz. animals; so also Nature (organic power) is attendant on a harmonious mingling of qualities in order to dwell therein, and to form the plant.

15. THE KHAZARI: These are the general rules of a complete science which must be specified. Continue thy discourse about the advantages of Eretz Israel.

16. THE RABBI: The land was appointed for the instruction of mankind and apportioned to the tribes of Israel from the time of the confusion of tongues, as it is said: 'When the Most High divided among the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Man, He set up the frontiers of the

nations according to the number of the sons of Israel' (Deut. xxxii, 8). Abraham, also, was not fit to be associated with the Divine power and to enter into a covenant with Him—the covenant 'of the pieces of sacrifice' (Gen. xv)—until he had reached that land. And what is now thy opinion of a 'picked community' which has merited the appellation 'people of God', in a land, called 'the inheritance of God' (1 Sam. xxvi, 19; Ps. lxxix, 1), and of seasons fixed by Him, not agreed upon or settled by astronomical calculations, and therefore styled: 'feasts of the Lord', of the observance of rules regarding purity and worship, prayers and performances fixed by God and therefore called 'work of the Lord' and 'services of the Lord'?

17. **THE KHAZARI:** In such a way we may expect the glory of God to be manifest.

20. **THE RABBI:** Thus the knowledge of the 'sabbath of the Lord' and the 'festivals of the Lord' (Lev. xxiii, 38 and 2) depends upon the country which is called 'the inheritance of the Lord', and, as thou didst read, 'His holy mountain', 'His footstool', 'gate of Heaven' (Gen. xxviii, 7); it is also said 'for the Torah goes out from Zion' (Micah iv, 2). How greatly did the Patriarchs strive to live in the country, whilst it was in the hands of pagans, how they yearned for it and ordered their bones to be carried thither as, for example, Jacob and Joseph (Gen. xlvi, 30; 1, 25). Moses prayed to see it; he considered it a misfortune when this was denied him, and as an act of grace, when the land was shown to him from the summit of Pisgah. Persians, Indians, Greeks, and other nations begged to have sacrifices offered and prayers to be said for them in that Holy House, and they spent their wealth on it, though they believed in other religions, since the true religion did not admit them. Today, also, the country is honoured, although the Shekinah no longer appears in it; all nations make pilgrimages to it, long for it—excepting we ourselves, being oppressed and homeless.

23. **THE KHAZARI:** If this be so, thou fallest short of thy religious duty, by not endeavouring to reach that place, and

making it thy abode in life and death, although thou sayest: 'Have mercy on Zion, for it is the house of our life', and thou believest that the Shekinah will return thither. And had it no other distinction than that the Shekinah dwelt there nine hundred years, this would be sufficient reason for the souls to trust in it and to purify themselves there, as it has been done near the abodes of the pious and the prophets; moreover, it is the gate of Heaven; all nations agree on this point: Christians believe that the souls are gathered there and then lifted up to heaven; Islam teaches that it is the place of Mahomet's Ascension and that prophets are made to ascend from there to heaven, and further, that it is the place of gathering on the day of Resurrection. Everybody turns to it in prayer and visits it in pilgrimage. Thus, thy bowing and kneeling in the direction of it is either hypocrisy or thoughtless practice. Yet thy earliest forefathers chose it as an abode in preference to their birthplaces, and lived there as strangers rather than as citizens in their own country.

24. THE RABBI: That is a justified reproach, O King of the Khazars! It was that sin which kept the Divine promise with regard to the second Temple from being fulfilled: 'Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for I come to dwell in the midst of thee' (Zechariah ii, 14). For the Divine power was ready to prevail in Zion as it had in the first place, if they had all willingly consented to return. But only a part of the people were prepared to do so; the majority and the men of rank remained in Babylon, preferring dependence and slavery, because they were unwilling to leave their houses and their easy circumstances. The power of the promises was weakened in accordance with their weakness. For the Divine power inspires human power only in such measure as the latter is prepared to receive it: if the readiness is little, little will be obtained, and much will be obtained, if it be great. Were we prepared to meet the God of our forefathers with a pure mind, we should find the same salvation as our fathers did in Egypt. But when we only say: 'Bow to His holy hill, bow to His

footstool' (Ps. xcix, 9, 5), 'He who restorest His glory to Zion', and similar words, this is but as the chattering of the starling and the nightingale. We do not realize what we are saying through these and other words, as thou observest, O Prince of the Khazars!

SACRIFICES AND TEMPLE

25. THE KHAZARI: Enough on this subject! Now I should like thee to make plausible to me what I have read about the sacrifices; for reason cannot accept such expressions as 'My offering, My bread for My sacrifices made by My fire, a sweet savour unto Me' (Num. xxviii, 2); here is said that the sacrifices are God's offering, His bread, and His savour!

26. THE RABBI: The expression 'My fires' removes all difficulty. It states that offering, bread and sweet savour, ascribed to 'Me', only belong to 'My fires', i.e. to the fire which was influenced by His power and fed by the offerings, the remaining pieces of which were used as food for the priests. The purpose of these commandments was to create a workable system, in order that the King could 'sit enthroned' there, in the sense of distinction of the place, not in a local sense. Compare the Divine power with the reasoning soul, which enters the body governed by organic and animal powers. If its organic faculties are harmonized and the relation between higher and lower powers is regulated for the reception of a higher condition than the animal, then it is ripe for the entrance of King Reason, who will guide and direct it and remain with it, as long as harmony is undisturbed, but departs from it, as soon as this harmony is impaired by disease. A fool may imagine, therefore, that Reason requires food, drink and scents, because he sees it subsisting as long as these things subsist, and removed when they are removed; but this is not the case; and similarly with the Divine power. It is beneficent, desirous of doing good to all. Wheresoever a being is found well prepared to receive its guidance, it does not refuse it nor hesitate to shed over him light, wisdom and inspiration. If,

however, the order is disturbed, this light cannot be perceived and is then lost, although the Divine power itself is exempt from all exhaustion or damage. Hence: if the whole order of sacrificial service, its proceedings, offerings, burning of incense, singing, eating, drinking, is to be performed in the utmost purity and holiness, and if, therefore, terms such as 'service of God, bread of God' are applied to it, all this expresses only His pleasure in the beautiful harmony prevailing among the people and its priests, and His readiness to accept—so to say—their hospitality and to dwell among them in order to distinguish them; He, however, is too holy and too exalted to find pleasure in their meat and drink. . . . The fire was created by the will of God, when the people found favour in His sight, being a sign that He accepted their hospitality and their offerings. For fire is the finest and noblest element beneath the sphere of the moon. Its seat is the fat and vapour of the sacrifices, the smoke of the incense and oil, since it is in the nature of fire to cling to fat and oil, as natural heat clings to the finest fatty globules of the blood. God commanded therefore the (construction of the) altar of burnt offerings, the altar of incense, and the candlestick, with their holocausts, incense, and the lamp oil. The altar of burnt offerings was destined to bear the visible fire, the golden altar (to bear) the invisible and finer fire, the candlestick to bear the light of wisdom and inspiration, the table to bear the gift of abundance and material provisions. All these implements stood in the service of the Holy Ark and the Cherubim, who protect it, as the lungs protect the heart. For all of them, auxiliary implements were necessary, as the wash-basin and its foot, tongs, firepans, etc. To guard the implements a house was required, viz. the Tabernacle, tent and cover—and to guard the whole, the court of the Tabernacle with its appurtenances. All this is graduated and arranged by the wisdom of God. I do not—God forbid—assert that the intention of that service was exactly as here expounded; indeed it is more obscure and loftier. It is commanded by God; and he who accepts it with all his heart, without scrutiny or scruple, is

superior to the man who scrutinizes and investigates. He, however, who descends from this highest grade to scrutinizing, does well to seek a wise reason for these commandments, instead of casting misconstructions and doubts upon them, leading to corruption.

27. **THE KHAZARI:** Rabbi, thy comparison is excellent; but I have not heard thy comparison for the head and the senses, nor for the consecrated oil.

28. **THE RABBI:** Quite so. The root of all knowledge was deposited in the Ark, which took the place of the heart, viz. the Ten Commandments; their 'branches', viz. the Torah, at its side, as it is said: 'Put (the book of the Torah) at the side of the Ark of the covenant' (Deut. xxxi, 26). From here there branched out a twofold knowledge: first, scriptural knowledge, whose bearers were the priests; secondly, prophetic knowledge, whose bearers were the prophets. Both were, so to speak, the people's councillors, seers and admonishers, its secretaries and chroniclers; they, therefore, were the head of the people.

ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS

29. **THE KHAZARI:** So you are today a body without either head or heart?

30. **THE RABBI:** So it is. Or rather: we are not even a body, only scattered limbs, like the dry bones Ezekiel (ch. xxxvii) saw. However, O King of the Khazars, these bones, which have retained a trace of vital power and have once been the seat of a heart, head, spirit, soul, and intellect, are better than bodies formed of marble and plaster, endowed with heads, eyes, ears, and all limbs, in which there never dwelt the spirit of life, nor can it dwell therein, since they are but imitations of men, not men in reality.

31. **THE KHAZARI:** It is as thou sayest.

32. **THE RABBI:** The dead religious communities, which desired to be equal to the living one, achieved nothing more

than an external resemblance. They built houses to God, but no trace of His (presence) was visible therein. They lived as hermits and ascetics in order to derive inspiration, but they did not derive it. They deteriorated, became disobedient, and wicked; yet no fire fell down from heaven upon them, nor swift pestilence, to be distinguished as God's punishment for their disobedience. If their heart—I mean their temple—was destroyed, their status has not changed; it changed only in proportion to their greatness or smallness, strength or weakness, disunion or unity, according to natural or accidental causes. We, however, since our heart, the Holy House, was destroyed, were also lost; if it be restored, we, too, will be restored, be we few or many, and whatever be our status. For our leader is the living God; He is our King, who keeps us in our present status of dispersion and exile.

33. **THE KHAZARI:** Certainly. Such a dispersion of a people is inconceivable without the same people being absorbed by another, especially after so long a period. How many nations which lived after your (ruin) have perished without leaving a trace, as Edom, Moab, Ammon, Aram, the Philistines, Chaldeans, Medians, Persians, Greeks, Brahmans, Sabaean and many others!

34. **THE RABBI:** Do not believe that I, though agreeing with thy (former) words, admit that we are like the dead. We still hold connection with that Divine power through the laws He has placed as a link between us and Him, e.g. circumcision, of which is said 'My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant' (Gen. xvii, 13), and the Sabbath, which is called 'a sign between Me and you throughout your generations' (Ex. xxxi, 13). Besides this there is the covenant with the fathers and the covenant of the Torah, first granted on Horeb and then in the plains of Moab, in connection with promises and warnings (Deut. iv, 25 ff.) and His words: 'If any of thine be driven out into the utmost parts of heaven, thence will God gather and fetch thy people' (xxx, 4); and 'thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God' (xxx, 2)

and the song 'Give ear, O heavens' (xxxii), and other places. We resemble, therefore, not the dead, but rather a person sick unto death, who has been given up by the physicians, and yet hopes for recovery through miracles or extraordinary events, as it is said: 'Will these bones live' (Ezek. xxxvii, 3), and in the parable (Jes. llii, 13 ff.): 'He is ugly and homely, like one from whom men hide their faces' (liii, 2, 3), which means that, on account of his deformity and repulsive visage, he resembles an unclean thing, which man only beholds with disgust, and rejects; 'despised and rejected of men, a man of pain, acquainted with disease' (liii, 3).

35. THE KHAZARI: How can this serve as a comparison for Israel, as it is said (liii, 4): 'Surely he has borne our diseases'? That which has befallen Israel, befell it on account of its sins only!

36. THE RABBI: Israel amidst the nations is like the heart amidst the organs: it is the most sick and the most healthy of them all.

37. THE KHAZARI: Make this clearer.

38. THE RABBI: The heart is visited without interruption by all sorts of diseases, as sadness, anxiety, envy, wrath, enmity, love, hate, and fear. Its constitution changes continually according to the vigour and weakness of respiration, inappropriate meat and drink, movement, exertion, sleep or wakefulness. These all affect the heart, whilst the limbs rest uninjured.

39. THE KHAZARI: I understand how far it is the sickest of all organs. But in which sense is it the healthiest of them all?

40. THE RABBI: Is it possible that in the heart there should settle a humour producing an inflammation, a cancer, a wart, etc., as is possible in other organs?

41. THE KHAZARI: Impossible. For the smallest trace of these would bring on death. On account of its extreme sensibility, caused by the purity of its blood and its abundance of animal spirit, it feels the slightest symptom and expels it as long as it is able to do so. The other organs lack this fine

sensibility, and it is, therefore, possible for humours to settle in them which produce diseases.

42. THE RABBI: Thus its sensibility and feeling expose it to many diseases, but they are also the cause of the expulsion of the same at the very beginning, before they have taken root.

43. THE KHAZARI: Quite so.

44. THE RABBI: The relation of the Divine power to us is the same as that of the soul to the heart. For this reason it is said: 'You only have I known among all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities' (Amos iii, 2). He does not allow our sins to accumulate—and to destroy us completely by their multitude, as He did in the case of the Amorites, of whom it is said: 'The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' (Gen. xv, 16); God left them alone, till the ailment of their sins became rooted and deadly. And just as the heart is pure in substance and matter, and of even temperament, in order to be accessible to the intellectual soul, so is Israel in its substance and matter; but in the same way as the heart may be affected by diseases from the other organs, viz. the lusts of the liver, stomach and genitals, by reason of their bad temperament, thus also diseases befall Israel in consequence of its assimilation to the Gentiles, as it is said: 'They were mingled among the heathens and learned their works' (Ps. cvi, 35). It cannot seem strange, therefore, that it is said: 'Surely, he has borne our disease and carried our griefs' (Jes. liii, 4). Now we are oppressed, whilst the whole world enjoys rest and prosperity. But the trials which meet us serve to purify our piety, to cleanse us and to remove all taint from us.

RELIGIOUS DUTIES

45. THE KHAZARI: But I should expect to see more hermits and ascetics among you than among other people.

46. THE RABBI: I regret that thou hast forgotten those fundamental principles which I explained to thee and to which thou didst agree. Did we not concur that men cannot

approach God except by means of deeds commanded by Him? Dost thou think that this 'approaching' is meekness, humility, and nothing else?

47. **THE KHAZARI:** Certainly, and rightly so. I think so, and I read in your books: 'What doth the Lord thy God require from thee, but to fear the Lord thy God' (Deut. x, 12), 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee (but to do justice, to love charity and to wander in meekness before thy God') (Micah vi, 8) and many similar passages.

48. **THE RABBI:** These are the rational laws, being the basis and preamble of the Divine law, preceding it in character and time. They are indispensable in the administration of every human society: even a gang of robbers must have a kind of justice among them; otherwise their confederacy cannot last. When the disloyalty of the Israelites had come to such a pass that they disregarded the rational and social principles—which are as absolutely necessary for society as are the natural functions of eating, drinking, etc., for the individual—but held fast to sacrificial worship and other Divine ritual laws, God was satisfied with even less, and it was told to them: 'Would you had observed those laws which are appreciated by the smallest and meanest community, laws which refer to justice, virtue and recognition of God's bounty'. For the Divine law cannot become complete till the social and rational laws are perfected; and rational law demands justice and recognition of God's bounty; and what has he who fails in this respect to do with offerings, Sabbath, circumcision, etc., which reason neither demands nor forbids, ordinations especially given to Israel as a corollary to the rational laws, through which it received the privilege of the Divine power, without knowing why they are necessary; in the same way they did not know how it came to pass that the 'Glory of God' descended upon them, and that the 'fire of God' consumed their offerings, how they could hear the voice of the Lord and how events came to pass which reason would refuse to believe if they were not guaranteed by irrefutable evidence.

Therefore it was said to them: 'What doth the Lord require of thee?' (Micah vi, 8), 'Add your burnt offerings to your peace-offerings' (Jer. vii, 21), and similar verses. Can it be conceived that an Israelite should observe 'the doing of justice and the love of charity' only and neglect circumcision, the Sabbath and the other laws—and yet turn out well?

49. **THE KHAZARI:** No—after all that thou hast argued. In the opinion of the philosophers, he only becomes a pious man who does not mind in which way he approaches God, whether through Judaism or Christianity, etc., or in a way he himself contrives. Thus we return to reasoning, analogies, speculating and dialectics, where every one may endeavour to invent a religion according to his own speculation—which would be absurd.

50. **THE RABBI:** The Divine law imposes no asceticism on us. It rather desires that we should keep the balance and grant every mental and physical faculty its due, without overburdening one faculty at the expense of another: if a person gives preponderance to desires, he blunts his mental faculty, and vice-versa; and he who gives preponderance to violence, blunts other faculties. Long fasting, therefore, is no form of worship for a person whose desires are checked and whose body is weak; for him feasting is a religious duty and victory over self. Neither is a diminution in income an act of worship, if the earning is lawful and easy, and does not interfere with study and good works, especially for the man who has a household and children, and endeavours to spend part of his earnings in aims agreeable to God; then it is even more suitable to increase earnings. Our law, as a whole, is divided between fear, love and joy; through each of them thou mayst approach thy God. Thy contrition on a fast day does no more to bring thee nearer to God than thy joy on the Sabbath and holy days, if the latter is the outcome of devotion. For just as penitential prayers demand attention and devotion, so also pleasure in God's command and law demands attention and devotion; thou shalt delight in the law itself

through love towards the Law-giver and consciousness of how He has distinguished thee; feel as if thou hadst been His guest, invited to His festive board, and thank Him in mind and word, and if thy joy induces thee to sing and dance, thy song and thy dance become worship and a bond of union between thee and the Divine power. Our law did not leave all these things to chance, but laid down decisive injunctions concerning them; since it is not in the power of man to apportion to each faculty of the soul and body its right measure, nor to decide what amount of rest and exertion is good, or to determine how much crop the soil must produce, in order that it may rest unploughed in the years of release and jubilee, and that the tithe, etc., may be taken from it; He ordained, therefore, the repose of Sabbath and holidays, and the repose of the soil. All this is also 'remembrance of the exodus from Egypt' and 'remembrance of the work of creation'; these two (events) belong together, because they are the outcome of the absolute Divine will, not of accident and natural phenomena, as it is said: 'Ask of the days past, since the day that God created man upon the earth, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?' (Deut. iv, 32 ff.). The observance of the Sabbath is, therefore, an acknowledgement of His omnipotence, an acknowledgement, however, through the medium of deeds; for he who observes the Sabbath because the work of creation was finished on it, acknowledges, no doubt, the creation itself; and he who acknowledges the creation, acknowledges the Creator and Originator; he, however, who does not believe in it, tends to the belief in the eternity of the world, and his conviction concerning the Creator is not undisturbed. The observance of the Sabbath brings us, therefore, nearer to God than worshipping, asceticism and retirement.

Behold now, how the Divine power—which attached itself to Abraham and afterwards to his whole ‘picked’ progeny and the Holy Land—followed the people step by step and guarded its prosperity, preventing all decrease of it; placed them in the most sheltered and fertile place (Goshen) and caused them to multiply in a miraculous manner, till it transposed them and planted them in a soil suited to the picked people. He is, therefore, called God of Abraham and of the land (Gen. xxviii, 13) as He is called ‘dwelling between the Cherubim’ (1 Sam. iv, 4), ‘dwelling in Zion’ (Ps. ix, 12), ‘abiding in Jerusalem’ (cxxv, 21), these places being compared to heaven, as it is said ‘dwelling in heaven’ (cxxiii, 1), since His light shines in these places as in heaven, although through the medium of a people fit to receive this light, and on whom He shed it. This shedding is called ‘God’s love’; it has been taught us, and we have been enjoined to believe in it as well as to praise and thank Him (for it) in the prayer ‘with eternal love Thou lovest us’, bearing in mind that it originally came from Him, but not from us, as we say, for instance, that an animal did not create itself, but that God formed and fashioned it, having found matter fit for that form. In the same way it was He who initiated our delivery from Egypt in order that we should become His legion and He our King, as He said: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God’ (cf. Num. xv, 41).

56. The influence of the Divine power is recognized, therefore, not in well-chosen phrases, raising the eyebrows, twisting the eyeballs, in weeping and praying, movements and words behind which there are no deeds, but in a pure intention, manifested in actions which by their nature are difficult to perform, and yet are performed with the utmost zeal and love.

COMMENTARY TO BOOK II

§ 1 ff. We already know (Book I, § 88) that Jehuda Halevi conceives the 'Unity' of God in the strict sense adopted by Arab philosophers. He now returns to this important point, seeing that the King understands sufficient Hebrew (§ 1) to follow the argument on such expressions as **כבוד, שכינה**.

Knowledge of the fact that the Torah preaches the unity of God (Book I, § 89) is here assumed (§ 1, end). But Christianity also professes this doctrine; and yet (according to the general Arab-Jewish opinion) it does not bear it out consistently, seeing that it attributes emotions to God (Book I, § 4) and expressly names three persons in the one God concept. With definite reference to Christianity, Jehuda Halevi declares:

1. Judaism recognizes no name for God in the strict sense of the word—that is: no Divine person; 'names' such as 'Shaddai' are attributes; for the Tetragram, see below.

2. It admits of no positive attributes for God, since these always contain a hint of anthropomorphism, but only negative attributes and evidence of God's relation and attitude to his creatures; in particular it attributes to God neither affects nor changes.

3. Physical phenomena, such as glory, are not to be referred to God, but to God's creations which were seen by the prophets (see Book IV, § 3, for the necessity of these).

These views are supplemented in passages such as Book II, § 50, end (we believe in God's love, but not in the literal sense). They correspond to the views of more recent theologists, namely that the anthropomorphic expressions applied to God are only to be interpreted in the sense of 'Ideograms'. They are also in line with medieval philosophy. Even the apparent exception to the doctrine of the negative attributes (§ 2, end), namely, the opinion 'that God can be termed wise', was shared by certain Aristotelians—our reason passing as something Divine which has only entered us 'from without'.

Thus, criticism of philosophy in no way hinders Jehuda Halevi from agreeing whole-heartedly with it wherever it appears to formulate nothing more than the old Jewish doctrine of the incomparableness of God.

On the other hand, Jehuda Halevi is original in the manner in which he distinguishes between the Tetragram and other names (*cf.* Book IV, § 15).

§ 14. Jehuda Halevi attempts to give scientific proof of Palestine's pre-eminence. This is shown particularly at the end of the paragraph, where reference is made to the same ascending order of the four realms of organic life (plant, animal, human, superhuman) as discussed in Book I, § 31 ff. On the other hand, he attempts to give historical proof for the fact of pre-eminence. In this he supports his argument partly on unquestionable Biblical tradition, and partly on a peculiar interpretation of verses such as Gen. xxii, 14, 'the place of which it is said to this day. . . .', where Jehuda Halevi interprets the Hebrew **הוֹם יֹאמֶר** as 'of which it will be said one day'; he may have interpreted the following words as translated above (similar to the Greek Bible version), or 'He will appear on the mount of the Lord'. As regards the quarrel between Isaac and Ishmael, he possibly has in mind Gen. xxi, 10 ('for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son'). What he says regarding the burial of the first man in Palestine, the quarrel between Cain and Abel, and Jonah's flight, is in accordance with Rabbinic tradition. At the end of § 20 he seems to take passages such as Psalms ii, 6; xcix, 5; 9, as references to Palestine.

Before § 20 we omit an argument about the appointment of the festivals and before § 23 a list of sayings by the Rabbis on the sacredness of Palestine.

§ 24. Note here again the dramatic turn of the conversation. The Rabbi admits the King's reproof to be justified, and even uses it to demonstrate the difference between his conception of the superiority of Palestine (based on natural science) and the general conception! *Cf.* the Zion poem on pp. 135 ff. below.

§ 25. As already mentioned in Book II, § 2, Jehuda Halevi rejects all anthropomorphism. He obtains an acceptable rendering of the expressions in § 25 by deriving the word '**שְׁאָלָה**' not from '**שְׁאָלָה**' (fire offering), but from '**שָׁאָל**' (fire) and by interpreting these 'fires' not as intended for God, but as the fiery apparitions emanating from God as on Sinai and in the Burning Bush. Thus the sacrificial rites—and in general all ritual performances—are not services rendered by us to God in His own interest, but rather arrangements which God has instituted for the religious perfection of man. In illustration of this idea, Jehuda Halevi conceives the Temple, as in

Book III, § 19, the State, as 'men in big', in line with the well-known designation of man as a microcosm (world in small); and he interprets the laws dealing with sacrifice and Temple ritual on the basis of the analogy of the organic, spiritual, intellectual and prophetic realms of life (Book I, § 31). If higher forces (e.g. intellectual) are to be displayed, the lower ones on which they are founded (i.e. the physical) must be fully developed; he who protects the latter from illness, etc., indirectly serves the former; this theory is followed up by Jehuda Halevi, in a passage omitted by us, down to the smallest detail. In the same way certain physical conditions are essential, particularly the kindling of prescribed fire, for the drawing down of Divine fire; according to Book III, § 23, the connection between prescribed action and supernatural effect is puzzling, but not more puzzling and not less essential than the connection between the bond of man and wife and the origin of new life.

§ 28. Jehuda Halevi only answers the questions on the parallel to the human head. He approaches the question of the senses only in so far as he refers fairly clearly, in his presentation of the functions of priest and prophet, to the doctrine (of Galen) of the three 'inner senses' (powers of imagination, of thought and of memory). He could safely assume the fact of anointing oil being used for the priests to be well known.

§ 30 ff. Jehuda Halevi sounds the peculiar character of Jewish history. The dispersion, the preservation and the hope of Israel's future rest on peculiar foundations. While the history of other peoples is affected by nature's laws, Israel's national life is bound up with the existence of its Temple, i.e. of its heart (§§ 29, 32). But the enigma of Israel's preservation testifies to the effect of a life-giving power within, lacking in other nations. This is the 'Divine Power', conceived here not only as a power leading to God, but even more as a power emanating from God. True, its effect is diminished by 'assimilation'. Here again, Jehuda Halevi makes use of a physiological simile. His readers are already acquainted with the term 'heart' denoting the religious aristocracy of mankind (Note to Book I, § 27), but 'heart' is here used only in the usual sense: the 'core'; hence its contrary is the 'outer skin'. Jehuda Halevi uses the simile quite seriously: the heart is affected by diseases of the body; hence the natural consequence: Book IV, § 23—the recovery of the heart brings health to the whole body!

In comparing Israel to the seemingly dead, Jehuda Halevi comes near to comparisons such as those used by the Rabbis *Taanith* 20a: Israel is *like* a widow (*Lamentations* i, 1), i.e. the resemblance is only external; Israel is not a widow, but a wife whose husband is on a distant journey, but will return to her.

§ 48. All those who have philosophized on Judaism down to the present day had to tackle those passages in the Bible that appear to lay more stress on the laws governing sacrifice, and other ritual precepts, than on the moral laws. The 'rationalists', particularly Jehuda Halevi's contemporaries Ibn Daûd and Maimonides, held that, in point of fact, the observance of the moral laws was more important—not by way of criticizing the ritual law, but in as much as they considered the training of character more important than the training of the mind, without contesting the value of the latter in any way. Jehuda Halevi, on the other hand, bases his argument on Plato's theory (*The State*, 351 C) that not even robbers and thieves can dispense with justice in their relations towards each other, without damage to themselves. It is therefore no wonder that the prophets reproach such people as do not even observe this minimum of moral duty, thus placing themselves below the standard of intelligent criminals. But on the other hand, the fact that the ritual laws were made solely for the aristocracy of mankind renders it all the more essential that we should attach a special value to them.

The justification of the ritual laws in the following criticism of the *Ascetics* (§ 50) goes much deeper. Jehuda Halevi rejects the 'mortification of the flesh' as definitely as the 'sacrifice of the intellect' (Book I, § 88; Book II, § 1). The ritual laws prescribe neither the one nor the other; they are irrational as is religion in general; but like the latter they are not anti-rational; reason cannot explain them—but it does not reject them; the pious Jew does not consider the great number of the precepts to be a burden (§ 56; *cf.* Book III, § 14); on the contrary: the love and delight with which he observes them are the test of his piety. Yet while Judaism recognizes the deep seriousness of the fast-days, it considers the joyous commands no less important. It is not joy of life *as such* that is held to be religious as in the religion of Dionysos. For we regard as religious only that which is in direct connection with the God of creation and of history (Book IV, § 15); but this is the God who is proclaimed by the Sabbath; and hence our joy, when it is governed by the thought of creation and redemption, bears as

religious a character as the practice of atonement. This day of remembrance of our redemption reminds us of the 'love' of our God (*see* Book II, § 1, for the figurative conception of this notion); hence this very day can be described as the gift of Divine love (e.g. in the Kiddush); and to this love there corresponds the 'joy' of man, as a natural reaction.

BOOK III

RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. The servant of God does not withdraw himself from secular contact lest he be a burden to the world and the world to him; he does not hate life, which is one of God's bounties granted to him, as it is said: 'The number of thy days I will fulfil' (Ex. xxiii, 26); 'thou mayest prolong thy days' (Deut. xxii, 7). On the contrary, he loves this world and a long life, because they afford him opportunities of deserving the world to come: the more good he does, the greater is his claim on the world to come. He would like, in fact, to attain to the level of Enoch, who 'walked with God' (Gen. v, 24), or of Elijah, in order to be freed (from worldly matters) and to remain in the society of angels; then he would not feel lonely in seclusion and solitude but would experience pleasure; lonely would he feel himself in a crowd, since he is deprived there of the view of the Divine realm, which frees him from the need of eating and drinking. To such persons complete solitude is suited, they might even welcome death, since they have attained to a height which nobody may hope to surpass. Philosophic scholars also live in solitude to purify their thoughts; nevertheless they desire the society of disciples who stimulate their research and retentiveness; such was the stage attained by Socrates and those who were like him. But these are outstanding men, and there is no hope today of attaining their level. When the Shekinah dwelt in the Holy Land among the people capable of prophecy, there were persons who lived an ascetic life in deserts, associated with people of the same frame of mind; they did not seclude themselves completely, but they supported each other in the knowledge of Law and in the practice of its commandments which brought them near to that stage 'in holiness and purity': these were the 'disciples of prophets'. But in our time and place, among this people 'whilst no open vision exists' (1 Sam. iii, 1), acquired knowledge being diminished and natural knowledge wanting,

he who desires to retire into ascetic solitude, can only count on pain of soul and body. The misery of sickness is visible in him, and one might regard it as the consequence of humility and contrition, but he lives as a prisoner and disdains life out of disgust for his prison and pain, not because he enjoys his seclusion. And how could it be otherwise? He has not achieved connection or association with any Divine light as the prophets did; nor has he acquired knowledge to absorb him and to enjoy as did the philosophers. Suppose he is God-fearing, excellent, desiring to meet his God in solitude, waking, humbling himself and reciting as many prayers and supplications as he can remember, (his) satisfaction of these self-prompted actions lasts only a few days as long as they are new; when his tongue repeats them frequently, they do not affect his soul and do not make for humility or submission. Thus he remains night and day, whilst his soul urges him to exert its inherent powers of seeing, hearing, speaking, moving, eating, cohabitation, gain, house-managing, helping the poor, upholding religion with money in case of need. Must he not regret this life to which he has tied his soul, and must not such a regret remove him further from the Divine power which he desired to approach?

2. THE KHAZARI: Describe the conduct of one of your pious men today.

3. THE RABBI: Pious is he who takes care of his country, who gives to its inhabitants provisions and all they need in just proportions, who treats them righteously, without wronging or preferring anyone—who finds them, when he requires them, obedient to his call and obsequious to his order and prohibition.

4. THE KHAZARI: I asked thee concerning a pious man, not a prince!

5. THE RABBI: The pious man is no other than a prince obeyed by his senses and by his mental as well as his physical faculties, which he governs like a city, as it is said: 'He who rules his spirit (is better) than he who occupies a city' (Prov.

xvi, 32). He is fit to rule; for if he were the prince of a country, he would be as just as he is to his body and soul. He subdues his passions and restrains them from excesses, but he gives them their share, satisfying them as regards moderate food, moderate drink, moderate bathing, etc. He subdues further the urge towards superiority, but allows it as much freedom as is required for the discussion of scientific or practical views as well as for the reprimand of the evil-minded. He concedes to the senses their fair share according as he requires them, using hands, feet, and tongue for necessary or useful actions, likewise hearing, seeing, and the general perception which unites them, as well as imagination, instinctive judgement, thought, and memory; finally will-power which commands all these, but is in its turn subservient to the decision of the intellect. He does not allow any of the limbs or faculties to perform their various tasks without restriction, nor does he allow them to encroach on each other. Thus, when he has satisfied each of them, giving to the organic limbs the necessary amount of rest and sleep, to the animal ones waking and movement in worldly occupation, he calls up his troop as a respected prince calls up his disciplined army, to assist him in reaching the higher or Divine degree, which is to be found above the degree of the intellect. He arranges his troop in the same manner as Moses arranged his people round Mount Sinai. He orders his will-power to receive every command issued by him obediently and to carry it out forthwith, leasing the faculties and limbs to do his bidding without contradiction. He admonishes the will, bidding it not to obey and trust the two tempters, instinct and imagination, without taking counsel with the intellect—to obey them if intellect accords with them, otherwise to resist. The will obeys his admonition and resolves to execute it. It (the will) directs first the organs of thought and frees them from all worldly ideas which filled them before; it charges the imagination to produce, with the assistance of memory, the most splendid pictures possible, in order to approach the Divine power which it seeks, e.g. the scene of Sinai, Abraham and Isaac on Moriah, the Tabernacle

of Moses, the Temple service, the presence of (God's) glory in the Holy House, and the like. The pious man then orders his memory to retain all these, and not to forget them; he warns his instinctive judgement and its 'tempters' not to confuse the truth or to trouble it by doubts; he warns his irascibility and greed not to influence the will to lead it astray nor to subdue it to wrath and lust. After this preparation, the will-power stimulates all his organs to work with alertness, pleasure and joy. They stand without fatigue when occasion demands; they bow down when he bids them to bow; they sit at the proper moment. The eyes look as a servant looks at his master; the hands do not play nor join together; the feet stand straight; all limbs are frightened and anxious to obey their master, paying no heed to pain or fatigue. The tongue agrees with the mind and does not talk idly nor speak in prayer in an automatic way like the starling and the parrot, but every word is uttered thoughtfully and attentively. This hour of Divine service constitutes the maturity and essence of time, whilst the other hours represent the road which leads to his goal; for in the one hour he becomes like the spiritual beings (angels) and is removed from the animal ones. And as these times of prayer are the 'fruit' of his day and night, so is the Sabbath the 'fruit' of the week, because it is appointed to establish the connection with the Divine power that he may serve Him in joy, not in contrition, as has been explained before (Book II, § 50). All this stands in the same relation to the soul as food to the body; he prays for the sake of his soul, as he takes nourishment for the sake of his body; and the blessing of one prayer lasts until it is time for the next, just as the strength derived from lunch lasts till supper. But the further the soul of the pious man is removed from the time of prayer, the more it is darkened by his coming in contact with worldly matters—still more when necessity brings him into the company of children, women, or wicked people, and he (the pious man) hears dissolute words or seductive songs, which he is unable to master—so that his soul is oppressed by them. Prayer, to be sure, purges his soul from all that has

passed over it and prepares it for the future; but in spite of this arrangement no week elapses in which both—his soul and body—are not satiated with weariness, oppressive elements having multiplied in the course of the week; and these cannot be cleansed away except by consecrating one day to service with corporeal rest. On the Sabbath, therefore, the body makes good what it lacked during the six days, and prepares itself for the work to come, and the soul remembers what it lacked as long as it looked after the body; it cures itself of past illness and provides against future sickness, as Job did with his children every week, saying: 'it may be that my sons have sinned' (and he sacrificed for them: Job i, 5). He then provides himself with a monthly remedy on the 'season of atonement for all that may happen during this period' (prayer for Rosh Hodesh). He further observes the Three Festivals and the very holy Fast Day, on which he casts off his former sins and makes up what he may have missed on the weekly and monthly days (of atonement). Then the soul frees itself from the whisperings of instinct, wrath, and lust, and turns away from any inclination to second these in thought or deed; and even if it cannot escape from thoughts, by reason of the weight of the conceptions, stirred by the remembrance of songs, tales, etc., heard in youth, it turns away, at least, from the deeds and begs pardon for the thoughts, but resolves never to allow them to escape his tongue, much less to put them into practice, as it is written: 'I think, but my thought does not proceed from my mouth' (Ps. xvii, 3). The fast of this day is such as to bring him near the angels, because it is spent in humility and contrition, standing, bowing, praising and singing. All his corporeal faculties are denied their natural requirements, being devoted entirely to religious service, as if there were in him no animal element at all. And so does the pious man always behave when he fasts: he curbs eye, ear, and tongue completely to the service of such things only as bring him nearer to God; it is likewise with the innermost faculties, such as imagination and mind. To this add wholesome practice.

6. **THE KHAZARI:** The Practice is known to all.

7. **THE RABBI:** Generally known are only social institutions and rational laws. Divine practice, however, added in order that it might be observed by the people guided by the 'Living God', was not known until it was exhibited and explained in detail by Him. Even the social and rational practices are known only by their main feature, not by their measure. We know that charity and chastening of the spirit by means of fasting and meekness are incumbent on us; that deceit, immoderate intercourse with women, and cohabitation with relatives are abominable; that honouring parents is a duty, etc.; but the limitation and moderation of these duties in accordance with common welfare is God's. And the 'Divine actions' are entirely beyond the sphere of our intellect; it does not reject them, but it must obey the order of God, just as a sick person must obey the physician in applying his medicines and diet. Circumcision has nothing to do with analogic thought or with the constitution of social life; yet Abraham, although this commandment is against nature and although he was a hundred years old, subjected his person and his son to it, and it became the sign of the covenant, that the Divine power might be connected with him and his descendants, as it is written: 'I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee' (and thy seed after thee) (Gen. xvii, 7).

8. **THE KHAZARI:** With good reason you duly accepted this command and you perform it with the greatest zeal, with public solemnity and ceremonies, praising (God) and mentioning the root and origin of the practice in the formula of blessing. Other peoples desired to imitate you, but they only had the pain, without the joy which can only be felt by him who remembers the cause for which he bears the pain.

9. **THE RABBI:** Just so it is with other imitations: no people succeeded in equalling us. Look at those who appointed a day of rest in the place of the Sabbath. Could they reach a higher

plane of resemblance than that which exists between statues and living human bodies?

10. THE KHAZARI: Having reflected about you, I understood that God employs means in preserving you and that He appointed the Sabbath and the Festivals as the strongest means of preserving your life and vigour. For the other peoples would have dispersed you and employed you as servants on account of your intelligence and acumen, and made you warriors, were it not for these festive seasons observed by you so conscientiously, because they originate with God and are based on great causes, such as resemblance of the creation, of the exodus from Egypt and of the giving of the Torah—Divine (ideas), inciting you to observance. Had these (festivals) not been, none of you would put on a clean garment, nor would you hold congregations to remember the law—in view of your deep depression as a result of your everlasting degradation. Had they not been, you would not enjoy a single day in your life; by them, you spend the sixth part of your life in rest of body and soul. Such is not granted even to kings; for their souls have no respite on their days of rest; if the smallest business calls them on that day to trouble and stir them, they stir and trouble themselves, complete rest being denied to them. Had these holidays not been, your toil would be for the benefit of others, since it would be exposed to plundering. Whatever you spend on these days is your profit for this life, and also for the next, because it is spent for the sake of God.

11. THE RABBI: The excellent man among us fulfils the Divine laws, which justifies him in saying: 'I have not transgressed any of Thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them' (Deut. xxvi, 13), without counting vows, free gifts, voluntary offerings and the free adoption of the Nazirite vow. These are the religious laws, most of which are performed through priestly service. Social laws are as follows: 'Thou shalt not murder, commit adultery, steal, nor bear false witness against thy neighbour' (Ex. xx, 13), honouring the parents, 'Thou shalt love thy fellow creatures' (Lev. xix, 18),

'love ye the stranger' (Deut. x, 19), 'thou shalt not deal falsely nor lie' (Lev. xix, 11), the avoidance of usury, the giving of correct weights and measures, the leaving of the gleanings, such as the unpicked grapes, the corners, etc. Laws of the mind are: 'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no (other gods before Me); thou shalt not take the name of the (Lord thy God in vain)' (Ex. xx, 2 f.), with the doctrine, proved by our religion, that God observes not only the actions and words of man but also his secret thoughts, and requites good and evil, that 'God's eyes wander over the whole earth' (Zechariah iv, 10). So the excellent person never acts, speaks or thinks without believing that he is observed by eyes which see and take note, reward and punish, and call to account for every thing objectionable in word and deed. He is, therefore, in walking or sitting, like one afraid and timid, who is ashamed of his doings; but at times he is glad and rejoices; he is full of self-confidence, whenever he has done a good action, as if he had paid, as it were, a tribute to his Lord in enduring hardships in order to obey Him. Altogether he bears in mind and takes as rule of conduct the words: 'Consider three things, and you will not commit any sin: understand what is above you, a seeing eye and a hearing ear, and all your actions written in a book' (Abot ii, 1); and he finds convincing proof (of them) in David's word: 'He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?' (Ps. xciv, 9) and in the whole Psalm cxxxix, beginning: 'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and knowest (me)'. (According to this Psalm) he considers that all his limbs are placed with consummate wisdom, in proper order and proportion. He sees how they obey his will, though he know not which part of them should be moved. If, for example, he wishes to rise, he finds that certain limbs he does not even know of raise his body like obedient servants; and it is the same when he wishes to sit, walk or assume any other position; this is what is meant by the words: 'Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising; Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways' (v. 2, 3). For one must not consider the work of creation

to be similar to an artisan's craft. When the latter, for example, has built a mill, he departs and the mill does the work for which it was constructed. The Creator, however, creates limbs, endows them with their faculties and grants them continually what they need; let us imagine His providence and guidance removed only for one instant, and the whole world would perish. If the pious man remembers this with every movement that he makes, it is as if the Shekinah (Divine Presence) were with him continually, and the angels accompanied him virtually; yet if his piety is eminent and he abides in places worthy of the Shekinah, they are with him in reality, and he sees them with his own eyes, occupying a degree just below that of prophecy. Thus the most prominent of the Sages, during the time of the Second Temple, saw a certain apparition and heard a Bat Kol (Divine voice). This is the degree attained by the holy men, and higher still is that attained by the prophets. The pious man attunes his mind to the Divine power through various means, some of which are prescribed in the written Law, others by tradition. He wears the phylacteries on that part of the head which is the seat of mind and memory—a strap falling down on his hand, that he may see it hourly—and the hand-phylacteries above the heart, the mainspring of the faculties. He wears the fringes, lest the senses entrap him in wordly thoughts, as it is written: 'that ye go not about after your heart and your eyes' (Num. xv, 39). By such means love and fear (of God) enter the soul, no doubt; but they are limited through the limitations of the Law, lest joy on Sabbaths and holy days degenerate into extravagance, debauchery, idleness, and neglect of the appointed hours of prayer, and lest fear deepen into despair of forgiveness, so that he spends all his life in defection and transgresses the command to feel pleasure in the gifts of God: 'And thou shalt rejoice in all the good which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee and unto thy house' (Deut. xxvi, 11); his gratitude for God's bounties would also be imperfect; for gratitude attends joy. Then there applies to him the word: 'Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joyfulness (and with gladness of the heart), therefore thou shalt serve

thine enemy' (xxviii, 47). Zeal in 'rebuking the neighbour' (Lev. xix, 17) and in scientific discussions should also not go too far and pass into wrath and hatred, disturbing the purity of the soul during prayer. The pious man is so deeply convinced of the 'justice of God's judgement', that he finds in this belief protection and help from the miseries and troubles of this world. For he is convinced of the justice of Him who created the living creatures, sustains and guides them with a wisdom our intellect cannot grasp in detail, but only in a general way, when it beholds perfection in the most wonderful structure of animals; these reveal the intention of an all-wise God and the will of an omniscient all-powerful Being, who endowed small and great with all the necessary internal and external senses, the limbs, and the organs corresponding to their instincts. He gave to the hare and the stag the means of flight and their timid nature, to the lion its ferocity and the instruments for delaceration. He who considers the formation and use of the limbs, and their relation to the animal instinct, sees in them so just a proportion and so perfect an arrangement, that no doubt or uncertainty can remain in his soul concerning the justice of the Creator. And if the tempter, instinctive judgement, upbraids the injustice to the hare or to the fly that falls prey to the lion and the wolf or to the spider, reason refutes and reprimands it as follows: How can I charge a wise being with injustice, since his justice is beyond question for me and he has no need of injustice? If the lion's pursuit of the hare, and the spider's of the fly were mere accidents, I should charge the accident; I see, however, that this wise, just, and purposeful Being equipped the lion with the means of hunting: ferocity and strength, teeth and claws, and the spider with cunning, with the art of weaving webs without having learnt to do so, and with the instruments required; He has consequently appointed the fly as its prey just as many fishes serve other fishes for food. Can I then say aught but that there is a wisdom which I am unable to grasp, and that I must submit to 'the Rock whose doing is perfect' (Deut. xxxii, 4)? Whoever has gained this solid conviction, will become like Nahum of Gimzo, of whom it is related that he said in every

accident of misfortune: 'This, too, is for the best'; he will, then, spend his life in happiness, and lightly bear the tribulations; he will even welcome them if he is conscious of a sin that weighed on him and of which he is cleansed by them, as one who has paid his debt, and is glad to be discharged from it. He enjoys looking forward to the reward and retribution which await him, instructing mankind in patience and submission to God, and thereby gaining a good reputation. So he overcomes his own troubles—and also those of the community. If his instinctive judgement calls to mind the length of the exile and the diaspora, the decrease and the degradation of his people, he finds comfort first in 'acknowledging the justice of (God's) decree', as was said before, then in the hope of being cleansed from his sins, then in the reward and recompense awaiting him in the world to come, and in the connection with the Divine power in this world. And if his tempter makes him despair of it, saying: 'Can these bones live?' (Ezek. xxxvii, 3) our traces being thoroughly destroyed and our memory wiped out, as it is written: 'they say: our bones are dried' (v. 11), he thinks of the circumstances of the delivery from Egypt and 'for how many favours we owe gratitude to God' (Pesah-Haggada); then he will find no difficulty in picturing our restitution, though only one of us may have remained, as it is written 'Thou worm Jacob' (Jes. xli, 14; that is to say): what remains of a man when he has become a worm in his grave!

12. THE KHAZARI: Such a man will live a happy life even in exile and gather the fruit of his faith in this world and the next. He, however, who bears the exile unwillingly, almost loses his rewards in both worlds.

13. THE RABBI: And that which strengthens and enhances his joy is the duty of saying blessings for all he enjoys or suffers in this world.

14. THE KHAZARI: How can that be? Are not the blessings an additional burden?

15. THE RABBI: Is it not true that a cultured man finds a completer pleasure in eating and drinking than a child or an

animal, even as an animal enjoys food and drink more than a plant, though the plant is continually taking nourishment?

16. THE KHAZARI: Certainly, because he is favoured with the observation and the consciousness of enjoyment. For if a drunken person were given all he desires, whilst being completely intoxicated, and if he were to eat and drink, hear songs, meet his friends and be embraced by his beloved, when told of it, he would regret it and regard it as a loss, not a gain, since he did not enjoy these things in a state of consciousness and clearness of the senses.

17. THE RABBI: Expectation of a pleasure, the experiencing of it and thinking of its lack in former times doubles the feeling of enjoyment. Such advantages result from the blessings for him who is used to saying them with attention and comprehension. For they make us feel pleasure and gratitude towards the Giver of that (pleasure) which we were prepared to do without; and this enhances the joy. You say '(Blessed art Thou who) hast kept us alive and preserved us', having been prepared for death: now you feel gratitude for life and regard it as gain; should sickness and death be near you, you despise them; for having made an account, you see that you have obtained profit from your Lord, since you ought on account of your nature to abjure all enjoyment, being dust; yet God presented you with life and joy. You thank him therefore, and if He takes away these benefits you praise him and say: 'The Lord has given, the Lord has taken — (the Lord's name be praised)' (Job i, 21). So you will remain cheerful for your whole life. Whoever is unable to pursue such a course, must count his pleasure not human, but brutish, since he lacks consciousness like the drunkard alluded to above.

In such a way the pious man realizes the meaning of each blessing, its purpose and what is connected with it. When he says 'He who created the lights', he realizes the order in the celestial world, the greatness of the heavenly bodies and their usefulness, but also that in the eyes of their Creator they are no greater than worms, though they appear to us immense on account of the profit we derive from them. The proof of this

estimation by their Creator may be found in this, that His wisdom and guidance appear in the creation of the ant and bee not less than in that of the sun and its sphere; the traces of providence and wisdom are even finer and more adorable in the ant and bee, since such faculties and organs are found in them notwithstanding their minuteness. This he bears in mind, lest he overrate the celestial lights and be seduced by the tempter to the views held by the worshippers of (celestial) spirits, and believe that these help or injure by their innate (power), whereas (they have effect) by their qualities only, like wind and fire.—At the blessing ‘with eternal love’ he realizes, in a similar way, the connection of the Divine power with the community fit to receive it, as a smooth mirror receives the light, and that the Torah is the outcome of His will to reveal His sway on earth, as in heaven.—(Following on from this blessing) he takes upon himself the Divine Law, reciting the ‘Shema Israel’ (Deut. vi, 4 ff.) and after it the passage ‘True and certain’, containing the confirmation of the acknowledgement of the Torah: after having clearly and unmistakably imbibed all that preceded (the Shema), he binds his soul and asserts that he regards all this as obligatory as his forefathers did, and that his children too shall regard it as obligatory up to the last generation, saying: ‘Upon our fathers, and upon us, and our children, and our generations (it is) a good word, firmly established, that never passes away’. To this he attaches the articles of faith which complete the Jewish belief, viz. the recognition of God’s sovereignty, His eternity, the providential care bestowed on our forefathers, the Divine origin of the Torah, finally the proof for all that: the exodus from Egypt, saying: ‘It is true that Thou art the Lord our God; truly from everlasting is Thy name; the help of our fathers (hast Thou been); from Egypt didst Thou redeem us’. Whoever pronounces all this context with pure attention is a true Israelite, and may hope to obtain that contact with the Divine power which is exclusively connected with the Israelite among all nations; he is worthy to stay before the Shekinah and to receive an answer as often as he asks. We are obliged, therefore, to follow

the blessing for the redemption with the chief-prayer, standing upright and reciting the blessings relating to all Israel—prayers of individual character having their place in the paragraph ending 'He who hears the prayer'. In the first benediction, called 'fathers', (the worshipper) remembers the excellence of the patriarchs and the firm covenant God made with them, unshakable for all days, saying 'He brings the Redeemer to their children's children'. In the second, called 'mighty deeds', (he remembers) that the (course of the) world is ruled by God eternally and not, as asserted by the Naturalists, by the known elements; he realizes that He 'revives the dead' whenever He desires, however far removed this may be from the analogic thought of the Naturalists, and likewise 'He causes the wind to blow and the rain to descend', etc., and 'delivers prisoners' according to His desire. All this has been established in the history of Israel. After having expressed his consent to the passages 'fathers' and 'mighty deeds', which might cause us to imagine that God is entangled in this corporeal world, he extols and sanctifies God and raises Him above all participation with or entanglement in corporeal qualities by the benediction 'holiness' (beginning:) 'Thou art holy', realizing in reciting it all that the philosophers have preached regarding His sublimity and holiness, but only after having acknowledged His omnipotence and sovereignty in the passages 'fathers' and 'mighty deeds', convincing us that we have a King and Law-giver; without them we should live in doubt in view of the Aristotelian and materialistic theories; the passages 'fathers' and 'mighty deeds' must therefore precede 'holiness'.—After having acknowledged God's sublimity, he begins to pray for his wants, included in those of the world of Israel, exceptions being admitted in supplements only. For a prayer, in order to be heard, must be recited by a multitude or in a multitude or by an individual who outweighs a multitude; but such men are no longer found.

18. THE KHAZARI: Why is this? Is not retirement preferable for man, better for the purity of his soul and the undisturbed attention of his mind?

19. THE RABBI: No, community is preferable for many reasons. Firstly, the community does not pray for what is hurtful to an individual, whilst the individual sometimes prays for something to the hurt of other individuals, and these pray for something that hurts him; a prayer, however, can be heard only if its object is profitable to the world and noways hurtful. Moreover: an individual rarely accomplishes his prayer without digression of mind and negligence; we are therefore commanded that the individual recite the prayers of a community, and if possible in a community of not less than ten persons, so that one makes up for the digression or negligence of the other, in order that a perfect prayer, recited with unalloyed devotion, may be made, and its blessing bestowed on the community, each individual receiving his portion. For the Divine power resembles the rain which waters an area, if the inhabitants deserve it (*Deut. xi, 14*), although perhaps some of them do not deserve it: but they profit from the consideration of the majority; on the other hand, rain is withheld from an area whose inhabitants do not deserve it, although some of them perhaps might deserve it; but they suffer with the majority. This is how God governs this world; He rewards these individuals in the world to come, and even in this world He gives them the best recompence and bestows blessing upon them which distinguishes them from their neighbours (*Gen. xix, 29*); but rarely are they completely exempted from general affliction. A person who prays but for himself is therefore like one who wishes to keep in repair his domicile only, refusing to associate with his fellow-citizens in the repair of the walls; in spite of his great expenditure he remains in danger; he, however, who joins the majority spends little, but remains in safety; for one replaces the defects of the other; thus the community attains the best possible condition, all its inhabitants enjoying its prosperity with but little expenditure, in justice and concord. Plato (*cf. Rep. 369 C*) calls therefore that which is expended on behalf of the law 'the portion of the whole'. If, however, an individual neglects the 'portion of the whole' which belongs to the welfare of the commonwealth of which he forms a part,

thinking to keep it for himself, he sins against the commonwealth, and more against himself; for the relation of the individual to the commonwealth is as the relation of the single limb to the body: should the arm, in a case where bleeding is required, refuse its blood, the whole body, the arm included, would perish; it is, therefore, the duty of the individual to bear hardships, or even death, for the sake of the welfare of the commonwealth. So particularly must the individual be careful to contribute the 'portion of the whole' without fail. Since it cannot be fixed by analogic conclusions, God prescribed it: tithes, holy gifts, offerings, etc., are the portion of our property; Sabbath, Holidays, years of release and jubilee, etc., are the portion of our actions; prayers, blessings, thanksgivings are the portion of our words; love, fear and joy are the portion of our mind.—Among the requesting prayers the first place is due to the prayer for intelligence and enlightenment to serve the Lord; for in this way man approaches God. Therefore (the prayer) 'Thou graciously givest reason to man' precedes the following, 'He who taketh delight in repentance', in order that this 'wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence' be directed to the way of the Torah and Divine service as the prayer continues: 'Restore us, O our Father, to Thy Law and bring us near to Thy service'. But since a mortal cannot help sinning, a prayer is required for forgiveness of transgressions in thought and deed; this is done in the passage 'the Merciful who forgiveth much'. Connected thereto is the outcome and token of forgiveness, viz. the redemption from our present condition: this passage begins 'behold our misery', and ends 'redeemer of Israel'. After this the pious man prays for the health of body and soul and in connection with it for the bestowal of food to keep up his strength, in the 'blessing of the years'. Then he prays for the reunion of the whole people in the passage: 'He who gathereth together the scattered of His people, the house of Israel'; in connection with it he prays for the reappearance of justice and restoration of our former condition in the words 'rule over us Thou alone'; then he prays for the removing of cinders and destruction of thorns in the 'blessing against heretics' and in

connection with it for the preservation of the picked in 'pious and just', then for the return to Jerusalem and its restoration as seat of the Divine power, and in connection with it for the Messiah, the son of David. This concludes all worldly wants. There follows the prayer for the 'acceptance of prayers' and in connection with it for the revelation of the Shekinah before our eycs, just as it appeared to the prophets, the pious and the generation delivered from Egypt, in the passage beginning 'may our eyes see' and ending 'He who restorcth His Shekinah to Zion'. He imagines the Shckinah standing opposite to him and bows down in the 'blessing of thanks and acknowledgement', which contains the acknowledgement and gratitude for God's gracc. He attaches the blessing 'who maketh peace', in order to take leave from the presence of the Shckinah in peacc.

RABBINIC JUDAISM AND ITS BRANCH SECTS

64. THE KHAZARI: Please illustrate for me the manner of tradition, because this (manner) must prove its trustworthiness.

65. THE RABBI: Prophecy was prevalent about forty years in the period of the second Temple among thosc elders who had the support of the Shckinah from the first Temple; the people after its return still had Haggai, Zcchariah, Ezra and others. Forty years later there arose that assembly of Sages called 'the Men of the Great Synod'. They were too numerous to be counted. They had returned with Zerubbabbel and relied in their teachings upon the prophets, as it is said: 'the prophets handed (the Law) down to the Men of the Great Synod' (Abot i, 1). Then came the generation of the High Priest Simon the Just and his disciples and colleagues, then the celebrated Antigonos of Soko; among his disciples were Sadok and Boëthos, the originators of sectarianism; Sadducces and Boëthosians are called after them. Then Joscph ben Joëzer, 'the most pious among the priests', and Joseph ben Johanan and their colleagues. Then Joshua ben Peralja, whose history is

known; among his disciples was Jesus the Nazarene, and Nittai of Arbela was his contemporary. Then Jehuda ben Tabbai and Simon ben Shetah and their colleagues. At this period there arose the sect of the Karaites, in consequence of an incident between the Sages and (King) Jannai. He was a priest, and his mother was under suspicion of being violated (and therefore forbidden to be married to a priest). One of the sages alluded to this, saying to him: 'Be satisfied, O King Jannai, with the royal crown, but leave the priestly crown to the seed of Aaron'. His friends excited him to vex, expel, scatter and execute the Sages. He replied: 'If I destroy the Sages, what will become of our Law?' 'The written Law is in our hands,' they answered, 'whoever wishes to study it, may do so; the oral Law one should not mind.' He followed them and expelled the Sages, among them Simon ben Shetah, his son-in-law. Rabbinism was laid low for some time; people tried to maintain the Torah by means of analogic conclusions, but they failed; finally Simon ben Shetah and his disciples returned from Alexandria and tradition was restored. Karaism had, however, taken root among people who rejected the oral law and combated it by fallacies, as you see them doing today. Sadducees and Boëthosians are unbelievers who deny the world to come; they and the 'sectarians' are alluded to in our prayers; the followers of Jesus are called meshumadim (Baptists), having joined the mamudiyya who were baptized in the Jordan. The Karaites interpret the roots with their intellect; but in the case of the branches (particulars) they make mistakes; the damage sometimes extends to the roots, but through ignorance, not through intention.

R. Akiba reached a degree so near prophecy that he had intercourse with the spiritual world, as it is said: 'Four persons entered paradise; one of them peeped in and died; the other peeped in and was hurt; the third peeped in and cut down the plants, and only one entered in health and left in health: R. Akiba' (Hagiga 14b). The one who died belonged to those who cannot bear the sight of the celestial world without the destruction of the body. The second became a demoniac,

seized by Divine frenzy, and men did not benefit from him. The third repudiated practice, having perceived theory; he said: 'these actions are but means and instruments to attain spiritual rank; I have attained it and I do not need to bother about religious actions'. So he was corrupt and corrupted others, erred and caused others to err. R. Akiba, however, conversed with both worlds without harm; it was said of him: 'he was as worthy of connection with the Shekinah as Moses, but the period was not worthy'. He was one of the 'ten martyrs' executed by the Roman government; during his torture he asked his pupils whether the time of reciting the Shema had arrived. They answered: 'O our master, even now—?' And he replied 'All my days I was afflicted by reason of the commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul (Deut. vi, 5), viz: even if He takes away thy soul; now, the opportunity being given, shall I not fulfil it?' And he protracted the word 'chad' (the One) till his soul fled.

66. THE KHAZARI: Such a man must spend a happy life, and die a happy death, and then enjoy the eternal life in never-ceasing bliss.

67. THE RABBI: These are a few of the many tales and traditions about our Sages. They treated the Mishnah with the same care as the Torah, guarding the traditions in such a manner that no suspicion of arbitrary invention could arise. Besides this, the Mishnah has preserved a large amount of pure Hebrew expressions which are not borrowed from the Bible. The terseness of its language, the beauty of its arrangement, the excellence of composition, the complete consideration of all aspects of the objects in a lucid diction, leaving neither doubt nor obscurity, are so striking that every one who scrutinizes it genuinely must become aware that no mortal is capable of composing such a work without Divine assistance. It is opposed by those only who do not know it and never endeavoured to read and study it; having heard through the

traditions of the Sages only popular sayings and homiletic interpretations, they judge them senseless and foolish, just as one who judges a person to be foolish after meeting him by accident, without having examined him or conversed with him for any length of time. As regards the traditions and traditionalists of the Talmud, however, their methods, their sayings and parables, it would lead us too far to investigate them. If there is in them many a thing which appears less attractive to us, we should remember that they were usual and caused pleasure in those days.

68. **THE KHAZARI:** Indeed, several details in their sayings seem to contradict thy general description of their qualities, e.g. they interpret verses of the Torah in a manner opposed to analogic thought and contradicting the literal sense, as testified by our feeling, for legal deductions and for homiletic purposes; and many of their tales and stories are also contrary to reason.

69. **THE RABBI:** Hast thou noticed how strictly and minutely they comment the Mishnah and Baraita, what accuracy and care they employ without any negligence as regards expressions or even things?

70. **THE KHAZARI:** I have assured myself that they attained the climax of evidence; even their arguments cannot be subject to any objection.

71. **THE RABBI:** Can we assume that he who penetrates the Mishnah with such thoroughness should not understand a Bible verse as well as we?

72. **THE KHAZARI:** This is impossible. Two cases only are imaginable: either we do not know their methods of interpreting the Torah, or the interpreters of the Mishnah are different from those of the Torah.

73. **THE RABBI:** Let us rather assume another alternative: either they had inherited secret methods, unknown to us, of interpretation of the Torah according to the 'thirteen (traditional) rules', or they use some Biblical verses as a kind of fulcrum—they call it 'asmakta'—and make them a sort of reminder of their traditions. The verse 'God the Lord

commanded the man, saying: of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat' (Gen. ii, 16), e.g. is interpreted as an allusion to the seven laws given to the descendants of Noah: 'commanded' refers to jurisdiction, 'the Lord' to forbidding blasphemy, 'God' to prohibition of idolatry, 'the man' to murder, 'saying' to incest, 'of every tree of the garden' to robbery, 'thou mayest freely eat' to prohibition of flesh from a living animal. How wide is the difference between all that and the verse! But these seven laws were generally known by tradition and were connected with the verse as an aid of memory. Perhaps both reasons mentioned above were effectual or others which are lost to us. In every case, however, it is our duty to acknowledge the authority of the Sages, considering their celebrated wisdom, piety, zeal and their great number, which excludes arbitrary invention; we must not object to their words, but must put the blame on our own intelligence, as we do in the Torah, in cases where the contents are not evident to our intellect: there, too, no objection is taken, but we charge only our own insufficiency. As to the haggadot (homiletic interpretations), many of them serve as basis and introduction for explanations and injunctions. For instance: 'The Sages said: when the Lord of the worlds descended to Egypt'—this passage is designed to confirm the belief that the exodus from Egypt was a deliberate act of God, and not an accident, nor achieved by mediation of human plotting, stars' spirits, angels, jinn or other beings occurring to our mind, but by God's commandment alone. In such cases they used (the word) 'kivejakol' ('so to say', literally: 'if it were possible'), meaning: 'if it could be so, it would be so'. For the rest, this anthropomorphic passage is not to be found in the Talmud, but only in certain prayer-books for Pesah. If thou findest similar passages, explain them in this way. Some haggadot are tales on visions of spirits. In the case of such excellent men it is not strange at all that they saw visions, either in imagination, in consequence of their lofty thoughts and pure minds, or even in reality, as did the prophets. Similar is the nature of Bat Kol (literally: daughter

of voice), often heard in the time of the second Temple, which ranks after prophecy and Divine voice; do not consider strange what R. Ishmael said: 'I heard a (Divine) voice cooing like a dove' (Berak. 3a), or similar passages; for the visions of Moses and Eliah prove that such a thing is possible; when there is a trustworthy tradition, it must be accepted. And the words attributed to God in this passage: 'Woe unto me that I have destroyed my house' are to be explained in the same figurative way as 'It repented the Lord and it grieved Him in His heart' (Gen. vi, 6). Other (haggadot) are parables employed to express mysterious teachings which are not to be made public, because they are of no use for the masses, and only handed over to selected individuals for research and investigation, in order that a person who is mature for them—one in an age or even in several ages—may be aware of them. Other haggadot seem absurd in their literal sense, but their meaning appears after a little reflection; e.g. 'Seven things were created before the world: Paradise, the Torah, the pious, Israel, the throne of Glory, Jerusalem, and the Messiah, the son of David' (cf. Pes. 54a). This is similar to the saying of some scholars: 'the first in thought is the last in execution' (Aristotle). For the aim of (Divine) wisdom in creating the world was the Torah, which is the essence of wisdom; its bearers are the pious; among them stands 'the Throne of Glory'; the origin of the truly pious can be only in the 'pick' (of mankind), in Israel; conforming to them is alone the most distinguished of all regions, Jerusalem; only the best of men, the Messiah, son of David, is able to guide them; and the place they attain to is Paradise. They all must therefore be said to have virtually existed before the world. Another passage whose literal sense is absurd: 'Ten things were created in the twilight (of the sixth day of creation): the mouth of the earth (which swallowed Korah), the mouth of the spring, the mouth of the ass, etc.' (Abot v, 9). The aim of this passage is to bring into unison natural science and Torah, the former showing conformity to the law of nature, the latter preaching deviation from it: unison is brought about by doctrine, that uniformity

is also founded in nature, since their origin was fixed by the primordial will in the days of creation on certain conditions.

However, I will not deny, O King of the Khazars, that there are matters in the Talmud which I am unable to explain satisfactorily or to bring into line with the whole. They are incorporated in the Talmud by the zeal of disciples who followed the principle that 'even commonplace talk of the Sages requires study' (Avoda zara 19b). They took care to reproduce only that which they had heard from their teachers, but they strove at the same time to hand down everything they had heard from them, and they endeavoured to render it with the same words; it may happen that they did not grasp the meaning and said: 'thus have we been taught and have heard'; the teachers, however, probably had certain purposes concealed from the pupils. The matter having come to us in this form, we think little of it, because we do not know its purpose. But all this does not relate to permissions and prohibitions; it is therefore unimportant to us from the practical point of view and does not reduce the value of the Talmud, even apart from the points of view mentioned above.

74. THE KHAZARI: Thou hast reassured me greatly, and strengthened my belief in tradition. But now give me further illustrations of the names of God.

COMMENTARY TO BOOK III

§ 1 ff. The discussion of the Jewish doctrine of duty begun in Book II, § 50, is continued in Book III in a more graphic form. Jehuda Halevi describes the life of a pious man in our times (§ 2), i.e. in times when there are no longer such exceptional people as the prophets (§ 1, 17, end); he does not adhere too strictly, however, to this time limit, and refers also to the sacrificial laws (§ 11), which can no longer be observed at the present day. His description forms an intentional parallel to Plato's picture of man as a miniature of a well-ordered state; but Jehuda Halevi (§ 5) compares the pious man not to the state, but to the one who directs the state. There are also clear references to Aristotle's doctrine of the 'middle way' and to the Pythagorean esteem of harmony. The division of the soul into three sections (thought, courageous desire, base lust) is also Platonic; added to this is the Arab doctrine of what we may call an 'instinctive judgement' (in approximate rendering of the Arabic), i.e. such judgements or prejudices as we find expressed by young children, uncontrolled by reason and often in flagrant opposition to it. Then there is the doctrine (of Galen), strongly developed in Islam, of the 'inward senses' and the 'general perception', i.e. the spontaneous combination of various sensual impressions (the sight of the whip arouses in the animal the thought of the pain of which it is the cause). But the foreign matter Jehuda Halevi works upon is merely the raw material with which he builds up his characteristic Jewish conception of life. In contrast to Plato, his ideal of life is based entirely on a religious foundation (see below); but his religious sense is quite opposed to that disparagement of this world and that condemnation of a natural joy of life of which distinct traces are found in the doctrines of the Church and Islam, but which also penetrated into certain Jewish circles; true, he uses the very expression that the Arabic has coined for 'secularity'—but he uses it generally in a much milder sense. The pious optimism shown in his conception of life is in no way the outcome of any under-estimation of the suffering of the world (as demonstrated in natural phenomena, in the fate of the individual, and, not least, in the fate of the Jewish nation). It proceeds from the realization that the pious man conceives this suffering in the religious sense; in particular, in his religious conception of duties he discovers sources of joy that were not open to other

religions; circumcision, which is no symbol of covenant for the Arab, cannot have for him the religious significance that it bears for us (§ 81); nor can the Sabbath mean for the Arab or the Christian what it signifies for the Jew, who is reminded by it of the exodus from Egypt. Compare, in this connection, Songs II and III, pp. 133-4.

§ 11, 2nd half. Jehuda Halevi approaches in a noteworthy manner the problem of the paradox of faith. Many a phenomenon inexplicable to us in nature (the suffering of animals), in the fate of the individual and, above all, in the fate of Israel, must induce us either to consider all that happens as the sport of chance or to believe in a Divine wisdom superior to ours. According to Jehuda Halevi, the latter belief can be justified logically on the ground of certain signs of Divine working, particularly in the structure of organisms and in the history of our nation; there is therefore no 'credo quia absurdum!' But psychologically we can maintain this belief in all situations that life presents only if it has not only taken root in our minds, but if we also keep up the feeling of submission to God by remembering constantly those signs of His wisdom that are emphasized by religious symbols (e.g. tefillin, reciting of the blessings).

§ 12 ff. It may appear somewhat strange to us that here, and in § 10 where he deals with the Sabbath, Jehuda Halevi assigns to religion the task of enhancing our earthly happiness. It would appear that he contradicts not only our mode of thought (influenced by Kant), but also that of the Talmud, where the phrase: *מצוות 'לאו ליהנות ניתנו'* (the laws are not given for our pleasure) apparently rests on a distinction between duty and pleasure. It is not sufficient to remember that *הצלחה* (=luck) and the exactly corresponding Arabic word embrace both the notion of external well-being and a deeper happiness independent of any influence of fate. The real reason is to be found in the realization that, according to Jehuda Halevi, the highest human force—i.e. the religious, can only come to maturity when the lower animal forces have been given full play (see § 5 beginning); the Jewish people, in particular, could not have maintained their religious susceptibility, if the festivals had not preserved them from the convulsion of their vital strength. The idea (§ 10) that the Sabbath raises the Jew temporarily to the high sphere of kings, which gains double force from being presented as the utterance of a king, anticipates Heine's 'Prinzessin Sabbat'; this idea stands out still more prominently in the Sabbath poems.

§ 17. Here Jehuda Halevi refers not to prayer in general, but only to the compulsory prayer that Islam designates by a special expression, considering it to be a most important religious act. But in accordance with his fundamental conception that the way to God is not to be found without the direction of the divinely inspired man, he holds it to be unquestionable that prayer prescribed by the wise men of Israel is higher than the prayer of one's own invention, although he himself was one of the inspired authors of prayer! True to this assessment, prayer is for him, as for S. R. Hirsch, less an expression of our feeling than a recitation intended to serve as an elucidation of our philosophy of life.

The public morning service begins according to him, as also according to Maimonides, with **ברכו**. His commentary on the first blessing (the heavenly lights) appears to be based on the fact that this blessing includes the seemingly unconnected verse from the Psalms: 'How great are Thy works, O Everlasting God! Thou hast created them all in wisdom—the earth is full of Thy possessions!' Jehuda Halevi seems to detect here a polemic against the religion of the stars, a polemic resting on the doctrine that God's wisdom is revealed still more clearly in the structure of organisms than in the splendour of the heavenly bodies. The second saying praises God as 'He who has chosen His people Israel in love'. The human affect, love, cannot in its literal sense be attributed to God (Book II, § 2); rather does the expression denote the act by which God distinguishes the 'aristocracy' of mankind (s. Book I, § 95). Jehuda Halevi rightly holds it superfluous to emphasize the instructive character of the following extract from the Torah (**שְׁמֻעָה**, etc.). He has no difficulty in demonstrating that the following passage beginning with the words: **אמֶת אַתָּה הוּא מְעוּלָם** contains and emphasizes the fundamental doctrines of the Jewish religion. He explains the instruction to follow this passage (ending with the words: **גָּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל**) immediately with the main prayer (the so-called **שְׁמוֹנָה עָשָׂר**) by saying that only he who has strengthened himself in the fundamental truths of his faith can hope to be heard. He points out that this prayer also begins as a prayer of confession; true, in history (the Patriarchs) as in nature (and in the miracle of the resurrection) God rules; but He Himself is 'holy', i.e. He is raised above all the merely natural.

§ 17, end-§ 19. Jehuda Halevi proves the superiority of public prayer to individual prayer, in line with the ancient theory that the

state is a living organism and that the individuals only represent its limbs (Livy II, ii). This theory seems, at first, out of place, though in fact it is absolutely in place preceding as it does a discussion on the prayer for the salvation of the community.

§ 66 ff. Jehuda Halevi defends Rabbinic tradition against the Karaites and the Christians. He presents the whole chain of tradition (we have omitted details) and gives an account of certain approved traits which tend to prove the reliability of the carriers of the tradition; he refers in § 67 (middle) to the beauty of the Mishnah to prove the collaboration of Divine forces, just as the Moslem does in Book I, § 5, with reference to the Koran. (This clarity of the Mishnah is also praised by Maimonides in his preface to 'Mishne Torah', and stands out clearly enough, especially in contrast with the intentionally unsystematic arrangement of the Talmud.) On the other hand, he points out that the anti-Rabbinic heresies have their origin in very human motives. This is clearly specified in references to the Sadducees, the forerunners of the Karaites; as regards the Christians, Jehuda Halevi is forced to content himself with two insinuations: his remark about the Karaites, who spare the roots though they prune the branches, contains a reproach aimed at the Christians, who do not even admit the authority of the Torah; moreover he hints that Jesus was, according to Rabbinical tradition, the pupil of R. Joshua, and he probably assumes the reader to know the sequel of this account (Sanh. 107 b and elsewhere), according to which Jesus forsook Judaism as the result of an over-emphatic, but not undeserved, reproof of his teacher. But with this presentation of the historical course of events, Jehuda Halevi in no way considers himself exempt from discussion of the main arguments of those opposed to tradition. The Karaites, whose services to exegesis are not disputed even by the Jews (Kuzari iii, 22), object particularly to those Bible interpretations of the Rabbis that undoubtedly fail to correspond with the literal sense and have been characterized by later opponents of tradition as the products of a very muddled exegetic faculty. Jehuda Halevi opposes this argument by stressing with absolute justice (§ 69) the fact that the peculiar methods used in the Rabbinical interpretation of the Bible do not appear in the Talmudists' interpretation of the Mishnah, and therefore cannot be attributed to methodic incapability but rather to intentional purpose; even in cases where this purpose remains hidden from us, it is our duty to react as

we do to the obscure passages of the Torah (§ 73, beginning) and, let us add, to the enigmas of nature and of history (*see* note to Book III, § 11 above), i.e. to seek the fault in ourselves! Hereby Jehuda Halevi clears the way to the understanding of the 'creative exegesis' of the Midrash (*cf.* my study on 'Altjüdische Allegoristik', 1936, p. 77), which does not claim to be the interpretation of Divinely revealed records in the scientific sense, but does claim to be their organic continuation and therefore follows special laws. In particular, such interpretations as that quoted in § 73 (beginning) are explained by the fact that, according to Rabbinical opinion, in many cases words used in the Bible cannot quite free themselves within the context from the meaning attached to them outside of the context.

Moreover, he admits, with admirable frankness, that certain passages in the Aggadah probably do not appeal to the taste of a later period (§ 67, end). Even in Talmudic times one finds traces of similar criticism; but he stresses the fact that this does not, of course, in any way affect the distinguishing characteristic of Rabbinical Judaism—the belief in the reliability of the lawful tradition (§ 73, end).

BOOK IV

THE NAMES OF GOD

1. THE RABBI: Elohim is a term signifying Him who reigns over or disposes of all things. It is employed in connection with the universe, if we mean the Sovereign of the world, and in connection with certain sections, if we mean the power of the spheres or of nature or of a human judge. The plural form of the name (signifying God) is to be explained from its usage by the Gentiles; they made idols and believed each of them to be invested with astral and other powers; each of them was considered as 'Eloah' (God); their forces altogether were called 'Elohim'; they swore by them, and (regarded) them as judges over themselves. An exact expression and characterization (of God) is found only in the sublime name written Yod, He, Waw, He (=the Lord). This is a proper name, the bearer of which can only be indicated by attributes, not by location like corporeal beings, He being unknown or only named by the common noun Elohim; whereas the Tetragrammaton (=the LORD¹) signifies Him alone.

2. THE KHAZARI: How can I indicate a being I am not able to characterize, but can only infer from his actions?

3. THE RABBI: No, God can be designated by prophetic visions and through the spirit. For the way of inference is misleading and may produce heresy and error. What else was it that led the Dualists to assume two eternal causes? And what led the Materialists to teach that the sphere was not only eternal, but its own primary cause as well as that of other matter? Inference also was the source of error of the worshippers of fire and of the sun. True, there are differences in the ways of demonstration; some of them are exact, others insufficient; but the most exact of all are the ways of the philosophers, and even they are led by their inferences to say that God neither benefits nor injures, nor knows

¹ Where we have put block letters, Jehuda Halevi uses the Hebrew terms אלהים (=GOD) and ה (=the LORD).

anything of our prayers or offerings, our obedience or disobedience, and that the world is as eternal as He Himself! None of them has therefore a definite proper name for God; but only such as hear His address, commands and prohibitions, His approval of obedience and reproof of disobedience, bestow on Him a name to designate the One who spoke with them and convinced them that He is the Creator of the world from naught. The first of these was Adam. He would never have known God, if He had not addressed, rewarded and punished him and created Eve from one of his ribs. By this he was convinced that He was the Creator of the world, and he characterized Him by words and attributes and called Him 'the LORD'. Had it not been for this experience he would have been satisfied with the name GOD; he would not have perceived what God was, whether He is one or many, whether He knows individuals or not. Cain and Abel also perceived God, after having been taught by their father, through prophetic vision. Then Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, down to Moses and the later prophets called Him 'the LORD' by reason of their visions; and so did the people, having been taught on their authority, and through their authority, in as far as God's influence and guidance is with man and in as far as the pick of mankind enters into connection with Him, viewing Him through intermediaries called 'Glory, Shekinah, Dominion, fire, cloud, likeness, form, appearance of the rainbow', etc., all proving to them that He had spoken to them.

9. He who is capable of seeing these lights is the real prophet; the place where they are visible is the true direction of worship; for it is a Divine place; and the religion coming forth from it is the true religion.

10. THE KHAZARI: Later religions, too, if they admit the truth and do not dispute it, all respect the place; they admit the existence of prophecy in Israel and the distinction of Israel's forefathers. They also perform pilgrimages to this hallowed place.

II. THE RABBI: I would compare them to those proselytes who may not have accepted the whole law with all its branches, but only the fundamental principles—if their actions should not belie their words. They praise the place of prophecy in words, but they turn in praying to places of idolatry, if by accident the greatest number of their people happen to live there, although no sign of Divine presence be visible in them. They retain the relics of ancient idolatry and feast days, changing nothing but this, that they have demolished the idols, without doing away with the rites connected with them. I might almost say that the verse oft repeated ‘you will serve there other gods, wood and stone’ (Deut. xxviii, 64, 36; iv, 28) alludes to those who worship the wood (cross) and the stone (Kaaba), towards which we incline daily more and more through our sins. But it is true that they believe in God, like the people of Abimelek and Nineveh, and like the philosophers who meditated on God’s ways. The leaders of religions are said to have perceived the Divine light at its source, viz. in the Holy Land; it is said that there they ascended to Heaven and were commanded to lead all the inhabitants of the globe in the right path. They turned in prayer towards the Land; but after a short time a change took place and people turned towards the place where the greatest number lived. Isn’t it as if a person wished to guide all men to the place of the sun, because they are blind and do not know its course—he, however, leads them to the south or to the north pole and tells them: ‘here is the sun, turn towards it, and you will see it’, but they would see nothing of it? The first leader, Moses, however, caused the people to stand before Mount Sinai, that they might see the light which he himself had seen, so far as they should be able to see it in the same way; he, then, invited the Seventy elders, and they saw it, as it is written: ‘They saw the God of Israel’ (Ex. xxiv, 10); afterwards he assembled the second Seventy, and so much of the prophetic light was passed on to them that they equalled him, as it is written: ‘(God) took the spirit that was upon (Moses), and gave it unto the seventy elders’ (Num. xi, 25).

12. THE KHAZARI: But the other religions approach nearer to you than the philosophers.

13. THE RABBI: There is a broad difference, indeed, between the believer in a religion and the philosopher. The believer seeks God for the sake of various benefits, apart from the benefit of knowing Him; the philosopher seeks Him only that he may be able to describe Him accurately, as he would describe the earth, (saying) that it is in the centre of the great sphere, but not in that of the zodiac, etc.; ignorance of God would therefore be no more injurious than ignorance concerning the earth by those who consider it flat; the real benefit is to be found only in the cognizance of the true nature of things, through which man becomes akin to the Active intellect. . . . But they had no other approach to theology but analogic thought. The fairest among them speak therefore to the believers in religions like Socrates who says: 'Citizens, I do not contest your doctrine of God; I say only that I do not penetrate so far; I only understand the doctrine of man!' But those religions, although they are nearer to us, withdrew from us. Otherwise Jeroboam and his party would have approached nearer to us; but they passed for idolators, although they were Israelites, practised circumcision, observed the Sabbath and other commandments, with the exception of a few which administrative emergency forced them to neglect; they acknowledged the God of Israel, who delivered them from Egypt, as we pointed out (Book I, § 97) with regard to the worshippers of the golden calf in the desert. The later religions are superior to them inasmuch as they did away with idols. But since they altered the direction of prayer and seek the Divine power where it is not to be found, altering at the same time most of the ritual laws, there is a broad difference between us and them.

15. But let us return to the discussion of attributes, from which we digressed. I should like to explain the matter by a simile of the sun. The sun is uniform; but the bodies receiving its (light) react in different ways. Those most fitted to receive its lustre are the ruby, the crystal, pure air and water; such

light as these receive is therefore called transparent. On glittering stones and polished surfaces it is called glittering, on wood, earth, etc., feeble light, and on all other things it is simply designated as light without any specific qualification. The general light corresponds to what we call Elohim (GOD), according to our explication (§ 1); transparent light corresponds to 'the LORD' (Tetragram), that name expressing only the relation between Him and His most perfect creatures on earth, viz. the prophets, whose souls are transparent and susceptible to His light, which penetrates them as the sunlight penetrates crystal and ruby. These souls take their origin from Adam, as has been explained before (Book I, § 95); his 'pick' (Book I, § 27) and 'heart' (Book II, § 36) are transmitted from generation to generation, from age to age; besides it the large mass of mankind is like husks, leaves, resin, etc. As god of this 'heart' He is called 'the LORD'; and because He entered into connection with Adam, the name God (Gen. i, 1-ii, 3) was replaced after the creation by 'the LORD GOD' (2, 4 ff.)—'a full name over a full universe' (Gen. Rabba xiii, 3); for the world was only completed in Adam, who was the 'heart' of all that was created before him. No intelligent person can contest the idea conveyed by 'GOD'; but there can be some discussion as to 'the LORD', because the gift of prophecy is strange and rare even in individuals, and much more so in a multitude. For this reason, Pharaoh disbelieved and said 'I know not the LORD' (Ex. v, 2); he conceived this name as meaning a penetrating light and understood it as a god whose light is connected with and penetrates man; Moses added therefore 'the God of the Hebrews', alluding to the patriarchs, whose prophecy and distinction through marvels were acknowledged. The name 'GOD', however, was widespread in Egypt; the first Pharaoh said to Joseph 'forasmuch as GOD hath shown thee all this' (Gen. xli, 39) and 'a man in whom the spirit of GOD is' (ibid. 38). The meaning of 'GOD' can be grasped by way of speculation, a Guide and Manager of the world being inferred by Reason; opinions about Him differ among men according to their faculty of thought; the

most evident of them is that of the philosophers. The meaning of 'the LORD', however, cannot be grasped by analogic thought, but only by that prophetic intuition by which man ascends, so to say, from his kind and joins the angels, 'another spirit' (Num. xiv, 24) entering in him, as it is written 'Thou shalt be turned into another man', 'God gave him another heart' (1 Sam. x, 6, 9), 'a spirit enwrapped Amasai' (1 Chr. xii, 19); 'the hand of the LORD was upon me' (Ezek. xxxvii, 1) 'munificent spirit may uphold me' (Ps. li, 14). All these are symbols of the Holy Spirit which enwraps the prophet in the hour of prophecy, the Nazirite and him who is anointed for priesthood or prophecy, when a prophet anoints him or when God guides him in any matter; or the priest, when he makes prophetic utterances through secret science after having consulted the Urim and Tummim. Then there vanish all previous doubts of man concerning GOD, and he despises all these analogic proofs by means of which men endeavour to attain to knowledge of His dominion and unity. Then he becomes a servant who loves his master, and is ready to perish for the sake of his love, finding the greatest sweetness in his connection with Him, the greatest sorrow in separation from Him. Otherwise the philosophers: they consider Divine worship only as refinement of conduct and confession of truth, so that they extol Him above all other beings, just as the sun is to be extolled above all other visible things—and the denial of God only as a mark of a low standard of the soul which acquiesces in untruth.

16. THE KHAZARI: Now I understand the difference between GOD and the LORD and I see how great is the difference between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle. To the LORD we yearn, tasting and viewing Him, to GOD we draw near through speculation. And this feeling invites its votaries to give their life for the love of Him and to suffer death for Him. Speculation, however, tends to veneration only as long as it entails no harm, nor causes pain for its own sake. We must not take it amiss that Aristotle thinks lightly

of the observation of religious laws, since he doubts whether God has any cognizance of them.

17. **THE RABBI:** Abraham, on the other hand, bore his burden honestly, in Ur Kasdim, in emigration, circumcision, removal of Ishmael, in the painful resolution to sacrifice Isaac; for he conceived the Divine power by tasting, not by speculating; he had observed that no detail of his life escaped God, that He rewarded him instantly for his piety and guided him along the best path, so that he moved forwards or backwards only according to God's will. How should he not despise his former speculations? The Sages (Sabb. 156a) explain the verse: 'He brought (Abraham) forth abroad' (Gen. xv, 5) as meaning 'give up thy astrology'. That is to say: He commanded him to leave off his speculative researches into the stars and other matters, and to devote himself to the service of Him whom he had tasted, as it is written: 'Taste and see that the LORD is good' (Ps. xxxiv, 9). The Lord is therefore rightly called 'God of Israel', because this seeing is not found elsewhere, and 'God of the land', because the peculiarity of its air, soil, and heaven aids this vision, together with (actions) such as the cultivating and tilling of the soil for the higher prosperity of the species. All followers of the Divine law follow these 'seeing' men; they find satisfaction in the authority of their tradition, in spite of the simplicity of their speech and the clumsiness of their similes, not in the authority of philosophers, with their graphic elegance, their excellent dispositions, and their brilliant demonstrations. For all that, the masses do not follow them, as if the soul had a presentiment for truth, as it is said 'the words of truth are recognizable' (Sota 9b).

20. **THE KHAZARI:** The light thou hast described is so completely extinguished that we can hardly believe in its reappearance; it is lost, and there can be no thought of its return.

21. **THE RABBI:** It seems only extinguished for him who does not see us with a clear eye, who infers the extinction of our light from our degradation, poverty, and dispersion, and

concludes from the greatness of others, their dominion on earth and their power over us, that they have a share in the (Divine) light.

22. THE KHAZARI: I should not like to conclude in that manner. For I see two conflicting religions prevailing, and the truth cannot be in both contrary affirmations, but in one of them or in neither! Thou hast shown me also (Book II, § 34) that, according to the chapter 'my servant shall prosper' (Jes. lii, 13 ff.), humility and meekness conform more to the Divine power than greatness and pride. This is acknowledged also by the two religions themselves. Christians do not glory in their kings, heroes, and rich people, but in those who followed Jesus all the time, before his faith had taken firm root, who were expelled or who hid themselves or were killed wherever one of them was found, suffering dreadful humiliations and slaughter for the victory of their belief: these men they regard as worthy of conferring blessing; they revere the places where they lived and died, and they build churches in their names. In the same way, the supporters of the founder of Islam bore many humiliations, until they succeeded; but in these their humiliations and martyrdom they glory—not in the princes who excelled by wealth and power; no, in those who were clad in rags and fed scantily on barley. Yet, O Rabbi, they lived so in utmost solitude and devotion to God. Should I see the Jews acting in a like manner for God's sake, I would place them above the kings of David's house, for I am well aware of what thou didst teach me concerning the words '(I am) with the contrite and humble spirit' (Jes. lvii, 15), viz. that the light of God enters only into the souls of the humble.

23. THE RABBI: Thou art right to blame us: our degradation has not yielded any result! But think of thoughtful men amongst us who could escape this degradation by a word spoken lightly—and even surpass their oppressors! But they do not do so out of allegiance to their faith. Is not such a religious deed worthy of intercession before God and of obtaining remission

of many sins? But if we should fulfil thy demand, we should not remain in our present condition! God, it is true, has a secret and wise design concerning us. It should be compared to the wisdom hidden in the seed which falls into the ground and apparently is transformed into earth, water and dung without leaving a trace—so it seems to the contemplator. But really this seed transforms earth and water into its own substance, carrying them from one degree to another, until it refines the elements and makes them like unto itself, casting off husks, leaves, etc., in order that the 'heart' (of the plant) may appear in purity and become fit to receive this power and the form of the first seed: then the tree bears fruit resembling that from which it had been produced. So it is concerning the religion of Moses: all later religions are transformed into it, though externally they may reject it. They merely serve to introduce and pave the way for the expected Messiah: he is the fruit; all will be his fruit, if they acknowledge him, and will become one tree. Then they will revere the root they formerly despised as we have said in explaining the (chapter) 'my servant shall prosper' (Jes. lii, 13 ff.: *cf.* Book II, 34).

COMMENTARY TO BOOK IV

§ 1 ff. The following argument on 'God' and 'Lord' (the rendering of the four letters that stand for God's name) is very significant. Through his comparison with the sun and the various forms in which it appears (§ 15) Jehuda Halevi forestalls any mistaken notion of a plurality of gods. To conceive 'the Lord' as solely a national God of Israel is likewise far from his intention; the distinction made by the Rabbis between 'God' as the judge of retribution and 'the Lord' as the dispenser of mercy does not suffice him. Rather do both names serve to set off the religious faith against the philosophic faith in a supreme being. Jehuda Halevi fully admits the justice of the question as to 'who may name Him' (Goethe, 'Faust') (§ 2); in fact we are only justified in using the word Elohim, which is not a 'name' but may be said also to indicate the mortal judge (§ 1), if we know no better approach to the recognition of God than that of the philosophers. But this is not the case; we can therefore name God actually only in as far as we recognize Him through the peculiar channel of revelation, which is the only basis of the *religious* connection between Man and God. True, Jehuda Halevi expressly admits in a passage omitted by us (§ 19 middle) that the philosophers also set up the claim of resemblance to God—this was often done from Plato on (Theaetet 176 B); he also admits that such an approach demands, as Plato puts it, a certain 'escape from life' and upright dealing. But, according to Jehuda Halevi, philosophy certainly cannot constitute the basis of the love of God; we may say even more precisely that the Greek language has no term to designate this religious 'love' other than the words 'friendship' or 'eros'; the former is considered by Aristotle to be absolutely inapplicable to our relation to the Divinity (M. Mor. 1208 b 27). Neither are 'Divine commands' recognized in Greek philosophy. True, the Greeks, and certainly the Romans, were no less conscientious than the Jews in the observance of their ritual customs; the philosophers also had their part in the official cult; but what moved them was the law of the state and not the will of the gods (Seneca), and although Aristotle does not mock at the practice of religious observance as Jehuda Halevi suggests (Book I, § 16), but rather recommends to the king the conscientious practice of the rites for practical reasons (Pol. 1315 a 1), this motivation does in fact amount to a certain contempt of ritual life. The contrast

between the philosopher's attitude to religion and the self-sacrificing love of Abraham, who is the model of a pious man for all three religions, is therefore most fittingly drawn. Hence in § 23 Christianity and Islam, having inherited this vigorous piety from Judaism, can be considered as the stepping-stones to the Messianic age. But not even Abraham was possessed by this religious sense from the beginning, but attempted at first to recognize God in Nature; Jehuda Halevi probably deduces this from the prevalent assumption that Abraham was the author of the mystic book of *Jesirah* (§ 25 ff.). Here Jehuda Halevi seems to hint at his own development—seeing that he too first sought to base religion on nature after the manner of the philosophers and only later arrived at the recognition of the true nature of religious experience.

In this connection Jehuda Halevi devotes a whole series of arguments to the *corporeal anthropomorphic presentation of God* in the prophets and in the mystical books, which can scarcely hold the present-day reader's attention to the same extent but which contain a very noteworthy basic conception. When, for example, the prophets say that God 'thrones' in Heaven or in Zion, such representations are not true with reference to the incorporeal God to which Reason aspires, but apply rather to a conception appealing to the imagination and the senses; they are the outcome of a peculiar 'inward vision' vouchsafed to the prophets (§ 3, second part). And if the philosophers believe that the abstract presentations of God's being and qualities can stimulate awe and love (§ 4), they overlook the fact that it is only tangible description that works upon our feelings, embracing as it does in a single vivid picture all that is spread over a whole series of abstract phrases. Bevan has recently made a similar observation (*Symbolism and Belief*, 1938), declaring that no theistic conception that is not content with mere negations (p. 254) can escape making use of anthropomorphic images (p. 26), and that an image such as 'God's hand' (p. 259) is an impressive presentation of the belief in God's direction of worldly affairs. Bevan devotes a special chapter to the representation (p. 125 ff.) of God as light, which Jehuda Halevi considers to be a particularly apt one. Jehuda Halevi is of the same opinion although he attributes a more lofty reality to the prophetic vision, and he is probably right in assuming that the use of anthropomorphic images betrays neither primitive instinct nor a wide concession to the ignorant masses, but is to be explained and justified through the channels of our own experience.

§ 23. The comparison of Israel in exile with the grain of corn is found in the Talmud Pes. 87 b. Israel is distributed among the nations in order that the Gentile may join it; for it is said: 'I will sow her (Israel compared to a wife) unto me in the earth' (Hosea ii, 25); 'a small quantity is sown that a great quantity may be reaped'. But Jehuda Halevi pursues the comparison in quite a different direction; just as the seed at first appears to be lost, then casts forth at first the less useful parts, and only in the end the most valuable parts, those that guarantee the perpetuation of the plant—so at first has Israel produced the two semi-true daughter religions and only in the end—in the Messianic times—will the latter develop into the true religion. This shows that Jehuda Halevi is far from expressing any 'resentment' against the religions that have oppressed Israel so heavily; he regards them as necessary preliminary stages in the religious development of humanity.

BOOK V

THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THE RELIGIOUS
APPROACH TO GOD

15. THE KHAZARI: Please give me a brief abstract of the views of the fundaments of faith of those whom the Karaites style 'the Masters of the Kalam'.

16. THE RABBI: This would be of no use, except as an exercise in debating, contributing to the fulfilment of the dictum 'Be careful to learn what to answer an Epicurean' (Abot ii, 14). A plain wise man like the prophets can only impart little to another person in the way of instruction; nor can he solve a problem by dialectic methods. The lustre of erudition, however, shines upon the master of Kalam (=dialectics) and his hearers prefer him to this pious and noble man whose learning consists in unshakable principles. But the highest pitch to which the dialectic may attain through all his learning and teaching is that in his soul and that of his disciples there may enter those principles which are found in the soul of this naturally pious man; in some cases dialectic even destroys many true principles, in consequence of the doubts and the change of opinions it produces. Dialecticians resemble metric experts, who measure the length of syllables; here we have much empty noise and erudite words on an art which offers no difficulties to the naturally gifted, who sense the metres and no fault can be found in them; the highest pitch which those scholars can attain is to be like the latter, who appear to be ignorant in metres, since they cannot teach it, whereas the former are able to do so; but the naturally gifted can teach another naturally gifted with the slightest hint. In the same manner sparks are kindled in the souls of people naturally gifted for religious life and approach to God by the words of the pious—sparks which become luminaries in their hearts; whilst those who are not naturally gifted must have recourse to dialectics, which often produces no benefit at all but even harm.

21. Set alone the argument of the Karaites taken from David's last will to his son: 'Solomon, my son, know the God of thy father and serve Him' (1 Chr. xxviii, 9): they conclude from this verse that we must first conceive God in truth, and only afterwards are we obliged to serve Him. As a matter of fact, David urged his son to obey the authority of his father and his ancestors in their belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose solicitude was with them, and who fulfilled His promises that their descendants should be numerous, that they would obtain Palestine, and that His Shekinah would dwell among them. The verse 'gods you did not know' (e.g. Deut. xi, 28) does not mean 'conceiving in truth', but 'beings from whom you saw issuing neither good nor evil' and therefore deserving neither confidence nor fear.

JOURNEY TO ERETZ ISRAEL

22. After this the Rabbi resolved to leave the land of the Khazars and to betake himself to Jerusalem. The King regretted the parting, and he began a conversation with him. 'What can be sought in Palestine nowadays, since the Shekinah is absent from it? Through pure intention and strong desire we may approach to God in every place! Why dost thou expose thyself to the dangers of land and sea and to risks incurred by contact with other peoples?'

23. **THE RABBI:** To be sure, the visible Shekinah has disappeared, revealing itself only to a prophet or to a community pleasant to God in the distinguished place; we look for that, as it is said 'they shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion' (Jes. lii, 8) and as we say in our prayer, 'Let our eyes behold when Thou returnest to Zion, Thy residence'. But the invisible and spiritual Shekinah is with every born Israelite of pure life, pure heart and sincere devotion to the Lord of Israel. And Palestine has a special relation to the Lord of Israel. Pure life can be perfect only there; many of the Israelite

laws lose their force for him who does not live in Palestine. Sincere devotion and purity of life reach perfection only in a place which is believed to have a special relation to God, even though this belief be founded on an imaginary or comparative conception; how much more so if it is right, as we have shown (Book II, § 14)! Then the yearning is bound to be strengthened, and the desire for God must be sincere, especially in him who travels to the Land from a great distance; still more in one who wishes to atone for past transgressions! It is true: the way of offerings is ordained by God for intentional and unintentional sins; but he relies on the saying of the Sages: 'emigration atones for sins' (Maccot 2b), especially since he emigrates to the place of God's choice. Through the risk he runs on land and sea he does not transgress the prohibition: 'you shall not tempt the Lord' (Deut. vi, 16), which refers to risks which one takes e.g. when travelling with merchandise in the hope of gain. Even if he incurs greater risks on account of his ardent desire of God and in order to obtain forgiveness, he is free from reproach for the sake of the dangers; it is as if he had closed the account of his life, expressed his gratitude for his past life and his contentment with it, and devoted to his Lord the rest of his days. Running into danger, he praises God if he escapes; and should he perish through his sins, he forbears and acquiesces in his fate, being confident that he has obtained atonement for most of his sins through his death. He acts more wisely than those who risk their lives in war, in order to obtain the reputation of bravery and distinction or to gain high reward; and this kind of risk is even inferior to the risk of those who march spontaneously in a (religious) war for the sake of heavenly reward.

24. THE KHAZARI: I thought that thou didst love freedom; but now I see thou strengthenest thy bondage by imposing duties which are obligatory only if thou residest in Palestine and bidest not here.

25. THE RABBI: I seek freedom—from the service of those numerous people only whose favour I shall never obtain even

if I work for it all my life and which would not profit me, even if I could obtain it: I mean the service of men and the courting of their favour. But I seek the service of One whose favour is obtained with the smallest effort and profits in this world and the next: this is the favour of God; His service is freedom, and humility before Him is true honour.

26. **THE KHAZARI:** If thou meanest all thou sayest, God certainly knows thy pious intention; and intention is sufficient before God, who knows the intentions and discloses what is hidden.

27. **THE RABBI:** This is true—only when action is impossible. But man is able to endeavour and also to work! He deserves blame when he does not apply for visible reward through visible action. For this reason it is written: 'Thou shalt sound an alarm with the trumpets . . . and thou shalt be remembered before the Lord thy God' (Num. x, 9), 'they shall be to you for a memorial (before your God)' (x, 10), 'a memorial of blowing of trumpets' (Lev. xxiii, 24). God need not be reminded or directed; but actions must be perfected to claim reward. Prayerful thoughts also are to be pronounced in the most imploring and submissive manner. Only when intention and action are brought to perfection are they rewarded. This execution of thoughts is like reminding in the human sphere; and 'the Torah speaks in a human manner' (*cf.* Nedarim 3a). Actions without intention and intentions without action are vain, except in that which is impossible; in such cases it is useful to bring to the fore the good intention and to exculpate before God the omission of action, as we do saying 'on account of our sins have we been driven out of our land' and in similar prayers. If we provoke and instil love of this sacred place among men, we may be sure of obtaining reward and of hastening the (Messianic) aim; for it is written: 'Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for it is time to favour her, the moment is come. For Thy servants love her stones and pity her dust' (Ps. cii, 14, 15). This means: Jerusalem can only

be rebuilt when Israel yearns for it to such an extent that we sympathize even with its stones and its dust.

28. THE KHAZARI: If this be so, it would be a sin to hinder thee; it is, on the contrary, a merit to assist thee. May God help thee: may He be thy protector and friend, and favour thee in His mercy! Peace be with thee!

COMMENTARY TO BOOK V

§ 15 ff. Jehuda Halevi at first holds out prospects of discussing the theological school of the Mutakallimun (literally the talkers or dialecticians), who exerted a strong influence not only on the Karaites, but also, for instance, on Saadya. Actually he appends to his mention of the name of this school a fundamental exposition of the relation of religion to religious philosophy, compared by him to the relation between poetry and the science of metre; today we should carry the simile further and say: between art and æsthetics (in the Middle Ages the latter was in its initial stage). Just as the genuine artist is not produced by knowledge of the laws of art and certainly not by intellectual superiority, but by a special gift—a ‘feeling’—so it is with religion: the religious man is not he who knows how to talk about religion, but he who experiences it; his task is not to convince by dialectics, but to stimulate by his example those who believe as he does.

The Arab thinker Ghazzali had already pointed out that ‘to explain’ and ‘to have’ were two different things; the drunken man cannot explain his intoxication, but he ‘has’ it (Obermann, ‘Der Subjektivismus Ghazzalis,’ 36 ff.). Jehuda Halevi probably knew of this simile; he adapts it and gives it a new turn. For intoxication, which even the Arab looked upon as contemptible, he substitutes art, thus placing religion in the realm of those values that reason comprehends and can analyse, but cannot produce by virtue of its own power.

§ 21, middle. On the limitations of the perception of God, see the commentary on Song I. The verse: ‘Know the God of Thy father’ is taken as a reference to philosophic perception, not only by the Karaites, but also, for example, by Bahya (*Duties of the Heart*, i, 3) and Maimonides (*More* iii, 51), together with other verses on the perception of God. This contrast again demonstrates clearly the difference between the speculative formulation of religion as given by most philosophers and the more historical foundation of Jehuda Halevi.

§ 22. It is known that Jehuda Halevi started out on a journey to Palestine notwithstanding the serious remonstrances of his friends; he did so not only because, according to the convictions of all three religions, pilgrimages were laudable and effected the forgiveness of

sin, but also because he hoped the soil of Palestine would exert a favourable influence on religious life (Book II, § 12) and because a shortening of the exile was to be expected from the immigration of Israel into Palestine (Book II, § 24; *cf.* Dinaburg's Study in *Yellin Jubilee vol. [Hebrew]*, p. 157 ff.).

The first of the King's criticisms (§ 24) is based on the observation that Jehuda Halevi apparently feels the slavery of Israel in exile more intensely than most of his co-religionists (Book I, § 115; Book II, § 24; Book IV, § 23); the answer is that he only rejects service of mankind in order that he may serve God. The second criticism (§ 26) has been cleverly circumlocuted in the Hebrew translation through the Talmudic saying 'God only demands the heart'. The rejection of this gives Jehuda Halevi an opportunity of stressing once more one of the main ideas of the book—the belief in the value of Divine service notwithstanding the importance of the religious inner life. He interprets the Talmudic saying 'The Torah speaks the language of man' in the sense in which it was understood by most philosophers, namely, that in its form of expression the Torah assigns human attributes to God.

SONGS

I

Lord, where shall I find Thee?
 High and hidden is Thy place!
 And where shall I not find Thee?
 The world is full of Thy glory!

5 Found in the innermost being,
 He set up the ends of the earth:
 The refuge of the near,
 The trust for those far off.
 Thou dwellest amid the Cherubim.

10 Thou abidest in the clouds,
 Yet art raised above their praise.
 The (celestial) sphere cannot contain Thee;
 How then the chambers of a temple?

And though Thou be uplifted over them

15 Upon a throne high and exalted,
 Yet art Thou near to them,
 Of their very spirit and their flesh.
 Their own mouth testifieth for them,
 That thou alone art their creator.

20 Who shall not fear Thee,
 Since the yoke of Thy kingdom is their yoke?
 Or who shall not call to Thee
 Since Thou givest them their food?

I have sought Thy nearness;

25 With all my heart have I called Thee;
 And going out to meet Thee
 I found Thee coming toward me.
 Even as in the wonder of Thy might
 In the sanctuary I have beheld Thee.

30 Who shall say he hath not seen Thee?—

Lo, the heavens and their hosts
 Declare the fear of Thee
 Though their voice be not heard.

Doth then, in very truth,
 35 God dwell with man?
 What can he think—every one that thinketh,
 Whose foundation is in the dust?
 Since Thou art holy, dwelling
 Amid their praises and their glory,
 40 Angels adore Thy wonder,
 Standing in the everlasting height;
 Over their heads is Thy throne,
 And Thou upholdest them all!

II

To love of thee I drink my cup:
 Peace to thee, peace, O Seventh Day!

Six days of work are like thy slaves.
 While toiling through them, full of restlessness,
 5 All of them seem to me but as a few days,
 For the love I have to thee, O day of my delight!

I go forth on the first day to do my work,
 To set in order the next Sabbath day's array;
 For God hath placed the blessing there:
 10 Thou alone art my portion for all my toil.

The lamp for my holy day is from the light of mine Holy
 One.

The sun and stars are jealous of my sun.
 What care I for the second day or third:
 Let the fourth day hide his lights.

15 I hear a herald of good tidings from the fifth day forth:
 Tomorrow cometh fresh life for my soul!
 The morning for my labour, the evening for my
 freedom:

I shall be summoned to the table of my King, my Shepherd.

I find upon the sixth day my soul rejoicing,

20 For there draweth nigh to me the time of rest.

Albeit I go about, a wanderer, to find relief,

At even I forget all my weariness and wandering.

How sweet to me the time between the lights

To see the face of Sabbath with mien renewed!

25 O come with apples, bring ye many raisin cakes—
This is the day of my rest, this my love, my friend.

I will sing to thee, O Sabbath, songs of love:

So it befitteth thee, for thou art a day of enjoyments,

A day of pleasures, yea, of banquets three,

30 Pleasure at my table, pleasure of my couch.

III

Thou hast bestowed great splendour on the Sabbath
Through the bond of peace and life.

And thou hast sanctified it, that it may distinguish
Between Israel and the other nations.

5 Who utter mere empty words

When they would compare their days with my holy day—

Edom later on the first day—and Arabia earlier on
the sixth—

Can the deceit of Ishmael and Edom mislead the men
of truth?

They compare dross with jewels,

10 The dead with the living.

And can there ever be for our neighbours, who think

To ascend the king's throne,

God's day of rest and man's,

Upon which God has set His blessing—

15 The first, the holy day of festival,

Which has endured since the beginning?

The tree of life springs forth from its sanctification.

In its shadow we live among the nations.
 The host who rules as priest in Thy name
 20 And who leans upon Thy name,
 Behold—he mourns upon Thy bosom;
 And rejoices at Thy table
 He has refreshed himself with Manna (doubled on the
 Sabbath)
 With yet a little flask-full left over.
 25 This is known to the islands,
 Celebrated among the nations.

Stretch forth Thy hand a second time
 To renew Thine erstwhile kingdom
 To Thy people wandering in the dark.
 30 Dispersed to the left and to the right—
 Then shame will befall Arabia and the Greeks.
 Renew the priesthood of Aaron
 That there may be sanctified in the camp of the Levites
 Thy name, which is desecrated among the nations!

IV

Thy words are compounded of sweet-smelling myrrh
 And gathered from the rock of mountains of spice,
 And unto thee and the house of thy fathers belong
 precious virtues

Whereunto praises fail to attain.

5 Thou comest to meet me with sweet speeches,
 But within them lie men in wait bearing swords—
 Words wherein stinging bees lurk,
 A honeycomb prickly with thorns.
 If the peace of Jerusalem is not to be sought,
 10 While yet with the blind and the halt she is filled,
 For the sake of the House of our God let us seek
 Her peace, or for the sake of friends and of brothers;
 And if it be according to your words, see, there is sin
 Upon all those who bend towards her and bow down.

15 And sin upon those sires who dwelt in her as strangers
 And purchased their vaults for their dead,
 And vain would be the deed of the fathers who were
 embalmed
 And their bodies sent to her earth—
 And they sighing for her sake

20 Though the land was full of reprobates;
 And for naught would the fathers' altars have been built,
 And in vain their oblation offered there.
 Is it well that the deed should be remembered,
 And the Ark and the Tablets forgotten?

25 That we should seek out the place of the pit and the
 worm,
 And forsake the fount of life eternal?
 Have we any heritage save the sanctuaries of God?
 Then how should we forget His Holy Mount?
 Have we either in the east or in the west

30 A place of hope wherein we may trust,
 Except the land that is full of gates,
 Toward which the gates of Heaven are open—
 Like Mount Sinai and Carmel and Bethel,
 And the houses of the prophets, the envoys

35 And the thrones of the priests of the Lord's throne,
 And the thrones of the kings, the anointed?
 Unto us, yea, and unto our children hath He assigned her;
 And though wild beasts abide in her, and doleful creatures,
 Was it not so she was given of old to the fathers—

40 All of her the heritage of thorns and thistles?
 But they walked through the length and the breadth of her
 As one walketh in an orchard among the green boughs,
 Though they came as strangers and sojourners, seeking
 But burial place and a lodging there, like wayfarers.

45 And there they walked before the Lord
 And learnt the straight paths—
 And they said that here arise the shades
 And those who lie under the bars of earth come forth,
 And that here the bodies rejoice,

50 And the souls return to their rest—
 See now, yea see, my friend, and understand
 And turn aside from the lure of thorns and snares,
 And let not the wisdom of the Greeks beguile thee,
 Which hath no fruit, but only flowers—

55 Or her fruit is: that the earth was never outstretched
 Nor the tents of the sky spread out.
 Nor was any beginning to all the work of creation
 Nor will any end be to the renewal of the months.
 Hark how the words of her wise are confused,

60 Built and plastered up on a vain unstable base;
 And thou wilt come back with a heart stripped empty
 And a mouth full of dross and weeds.
 Wherefore, then, should I seek me out crooked ways
 And forsake the mother of paths?

Notes to the Songs:

Song I

17—*Nearer than* their own spirit and their flesh
 18—Their own mouth testifieth *with regard to them*
 26f. *And when I went out to meet Thee*
 I found Thee coming towards me.
 28—‘Even as’—not in the original text—
 38—*But Thou art holy . . .*
 40—*Angels proclaim* Thy wonder.

Song II

4—*While toiling through them*, I am full of restlessness
 11—‘*The light of my holy day is from the light of my holy One.*’
 24—‘To see the face of the Sabbath *as a new visitor*’
 (A reference to the custom by which every day of the
 wedding week brings new visitors.)

Song IV

47—And they *say . . .*

COMMENTARY TO THE SONGS

Songs I, II and IV are reprinted from 'Selected Poems of Jehuda Halevi', translated into English by Nina Salaman, with permission of the copyright owners, The Jewish Publication Society of America. In passages where I disagree with the translator's rendering, I have added my version in the notes. Song No. III has been rendered into English by Hebe Mayer-Bentwich with reference to my German version.

Jehuda Halevi's religious lyrics obviously aim not only at satisfying æsthetic requirements like his secular poems, but, consciously or unconsciously, they serve a religious inspiration. In so far they support the arguments of the *Kuzari*. The relation between the two is illustrated in the *Kuzari*, Book V, § 16, where a comparison is drawn between the 'metric expert' and the poet, and between the inspirations emanating from either. Like the metric expert, the philosopher can appeal to any man of intellectual grasp; the poet, on the other hand, can only inspire the æsthetically gifted, for whom a slight hint is sufficient. The same applies to religious inspiration, which certainly does not emanate from the words alone, but also from the life of the devout man and, not least, from the direct expression of his experience in the religious lyric. In truth the same applies to the national sentiment, when it is expressed in the lyric; here also the words of the poet kindle sparks that inflame the heart of the reader.

Not all of Jehuda Halevi's poems can be taken as voicing his personal feeling. Very often there is an admixture of conventional expression of sentiment. But in some of his poems expression is given to thoughts of the *Kuzari*. They are a still purer and more impressive revelation of experience than the philosophic discourse. We have therefore appended a few of these and here add some short commentaries:

Song I

This poem, which is inserted in the passage of the morning prayers where the praise of God is proclaimed by the angels 'from His place', has as its theme an antinomy of religious consciousness. On the one hand, a religious man seeks God's traces 'in every place'; he considers it blasphemy when men attribute the wonders of organisms to nature instead of to God (*Kuz.*, Book I, § 76). But, on the other hand, is it

not a degrading of God to 'find' Him, i.e. to claim perception of Him in any 'place' (Kuz., Book V, § 21), or to place Him in relation to this lowly mortal world (Book I, § 8, *cf.* line 18 ff. of our poem)?

Jehuda Halevi is not the first to stress this antinomy. His predecessor Bahya solves the problem by admitting that it is only God's traces that we perceive and not His being. Jehuda Halevi would not exactly have opposed this conception; for according to Kuzari, Book II, § 2, we come much nearer perceiving God's working than His qualities. In our poem the poet is not seeking a way out. He allows the tension to stand and overcomes it only by the idea, expressed in line 26 ff., that in searching for God we find God. Pascal's idea: 'tu ne me chercherais pas si tu ne m'avais pas trouvé'.

Among the numerous parallels to this poem in European literature, the best known is the 'Confession' of the young Goethe in 'Faust': 'Wer darf ihn nennen und wer bekennen: ich glaub' ihn? Wer empfinden und sich unterwinden zu sagen: ich glaub' ihn nicht?' But Goethe calls God 'unsichtbar-sichtbar' in a sense different from Jehuda Halevi. He knows that the pantheistic feeling for nature, which penetrates him, is akin to the religious and yet remains a thing apart; it is no mere accident that the confession scene ends with the fall of the hero and the mocking laugh of the devil. Jehuda Halevi, on the other hand, 'possesses' God; and his doubt, as to whether he, an unworthy human being, may perceive God, emanates—from religion!

Song II

Jehuda Halevi is the first poet to sing of the Sabbath. Many before him had produced prayers for the Sabbath: he is the first to give expression in song to the *experience* of the Sabbath. The first words reveal the experience of that love and joy the religious significance of which is expressed in Kuzari, Book II, § 48. It is true that the Rabbis had preceded him in religious experience when they greeted the Sabbath with the exclamation: 'Come, O bride!' (Sabb. 119a), and as this exclamation inspired the best-known of all Sabbath lyrics, Heinrich Heine was not so wrong when he said that Jehuda Halevi had learnt from the Aggadah, and even when he confused him with Solomon Halevi, the author of the **לכה דודי!** But what in ancient times found its sole expression in symbolic acts finds poetic expression in the Middle Ages and in the Kabbalah through Bible reminiscence. As the years he served for Rachel seemed

unto the Patriarch Jacob but 'as so many days' for 'the love he bore her'—so for Jehuda Halevi (line 5) the weekdays are but swiftly passing forerunners of the 'beloved' day of cherishing (*cf.* Jer. xxxi, 19); the apparently worldly joys are only symptoms of this love: line 25 is reminiscent of the Song of Songs ii, 5, 'stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love'. But as God is the initiator of the fascination of the Sabbath (line 9, *cf.* Ex. xx, 11), the glory of this day is the irradiation of heavenly light—line 11. Heine is certainly wrong in assuming that Jehuda Halevi rejected the Halakah, i.e. the legal discussion. For the highly poetic conception of the Sabbath as the ruler of the weekdays—its slaves (line 3)—is taken from the legal provision that the weekday should be a preparation for the Sabbath (line 8), not the other way round; this appears even in the Talmudic discussion 'about the fatal egg which a hen had laid on the festival'. It was Jehuda Halevi's special merit that he gave voice to the inarticulate poetry of the Jewish law, thus converting it for us into a living experience.

Song III

In this poem, the belief in the peculiarity of the *Jewish* day of rest is still more strongly emphasized. The charm of this poem lies partly in the contrast—stressed by the rhyme—between **חַיִם** (= life or life's blessing) and **גּוֹיִים** (nations, especially non-Jewish). The explanation of this contrast is found in Kuzari, Book II, § 32, where Israel, i.e. Israel's faith, is represented as 'living', the other faiths being but imitators of this life, just as the statue is but an imitation of the living organism. This, according to Kuzari, Book III, § 9, is particularly true of the Sabbath; the imitation of the other nations resembles the original only in the sense in which the statue resembles the human body. Hence our poem opens with the words: 'Thou hast honoured the Sabbath by the bond of peace and life and hast hallowed it that it may distinguish between Israel and the nations'. And if they quibblingly proclaim their 'days' the equal of my holy day—Edom advancing it to the first, and Arabia setting it back to the sixth—how can their hoax deceive the bearers of the truth? In the same way one might set rags on a par with jewels (**לְעַדְיוֹם עֲדַיִם**) and the living on a par with the dead. Do our neighbours indeed find that 'rest of God and man'—that absolute

rest which, in the words of the King of the Khazars (Book III, § 10), raises the simple Jew above princes (*cf.* Heine), and saves the people from enslavement? Are their holy days days of remembrance of the rest-day of the creation (line 9) and, as such, the expression of our belief in the Creator? Do they call to mind the miracle of the manna, in which the non-Jews also believe (line 14 = Kuzari, Book I, §§ 4 and 9), as the basis of our trust in God's provision for the lower world? The comparison of man-made beliefs with the Divine appointment of the Sabbath must appear a blasphemy to Jehuda Halevi, debasing as it does the peculiar character of the Sabbath, which cannot be postponed or replaced at will.

Song IV

The belief in the pre-eminence of Palestine which Jehuda Halevi seeks to establish in Kuzari, Book II (§§ 13–24) finds expression in a number of his poems, of which the best known is the Zion Ode (translated by Nina Salaman, pp. 3 and 151). Although the poet speaks there in the name of the community (as 'the harp of its song'), his glorification of the land often bears his own stamp; the words 'how can other countries compare their vanities with your Urim and Tummim (which the High Priest wore)' are reminiscent of Song III with its message of the incomparableness of our religion; still closer in spirit is the thought 'that at that time it was not the sun nor the moon which gave light, but God's glory'. The phrase 'the air of Thy Land is the breath of life' is a reference to a Talmudic remark, but bears a special significance in the mouth of Jehuda Halevi, who believes in the superiority of Eretz Israel to all other countries; and the words 'I would take delight in thy stones and be tender to thy dust' attain their full significance through Jehuda Halevi's belief that only through such tenderness and love of the land can redemption be brought about (Kuzari, Book V, § 27).

The poem here quoted has a much more personal stamp. It contains the answer to the poem of a friend dissuading him from the journey to Palestine, seeing that only 'the blind and the lame', i.e. misbelievers, live there now, and that the land therefore has as little present significance as Greece, which also was once the cradle of culture.

After a few respectful words on the form of the poem, Jehuda Halevi's indignation at its contents bursts forth: 'for God's sake

and for the sake of our brothers' (line 11 ff.), for religious and national reasons, Eretz Israel has a unique value. At first he contents himself with indirect proof. Were it a country like any other, why did the patriarchs want to live, sacrifice and be buried only here (17 ff., cf. Gen. lvii, 29; l, 25), although even at that time unbelievers dwelt there (line 20 = Kuzari, Book II, § 23, end)? And they were right! For still higher than the veneration for the graves to which we pilgrimage must we reckon the reverence for the source of life (line 26) in which God has revealed Himself (Kuzari, l.c. 2nd phrase)! In addition to these religious considerations, we have national reasons: it has been promised to us and our children (lines 37 ff.) and, according to Gen. xiii, 14 ff., Abraham wandered around the Land (line 41) only because he considered it to be the inheritance of his descendants. And is it not the Land of marvellous hopes, even in the eyes of younger religions (lines 47 ff. = Kuzari, Book II, § 23, middle)?

On the other hand, Greece, like all other religions apart from the Jewish (Kuzari, Book IV, § 23), produced no 'fruit' or, what amounts to the same, only poisonous fruit (lines 54 ff.) such as the doctrine that the creation (*מעשה בראשית*) had no 'beginning' (*ראשית*) and no 'end' (*אחרית*), i.e. purpose (lines 57 ff.)! The worth of Greek profane science, which was appreciated by Jehuda Halevi as a disciple of Aristotle and the physicians, is not belittled by the statement that it cannot compare with the absolute worth of Palestine from both the religious and national aspects.

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